Gustav Klimt, 1862���1918: The World in Female Form \(

KLIMT

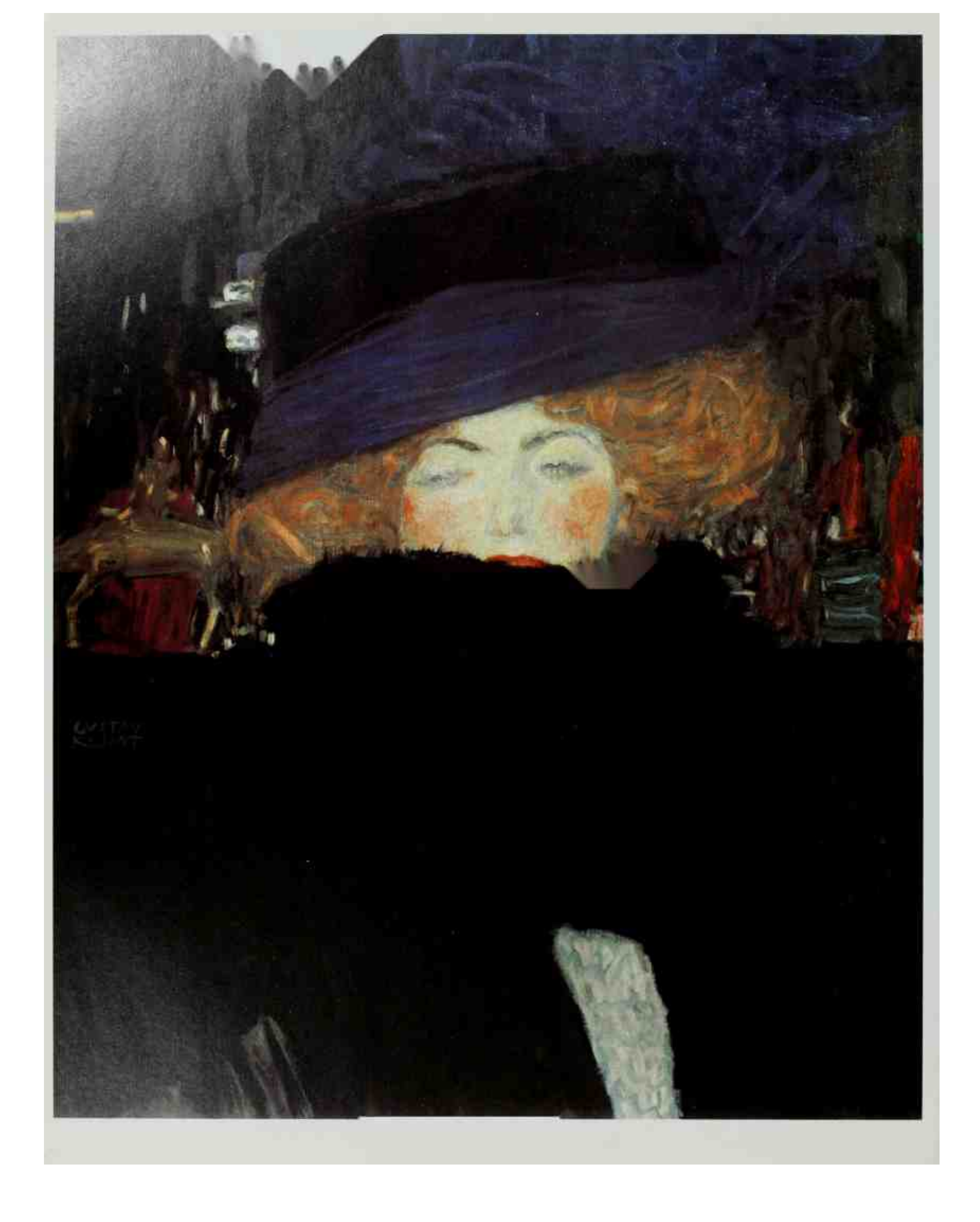
Gottfried Fliedl

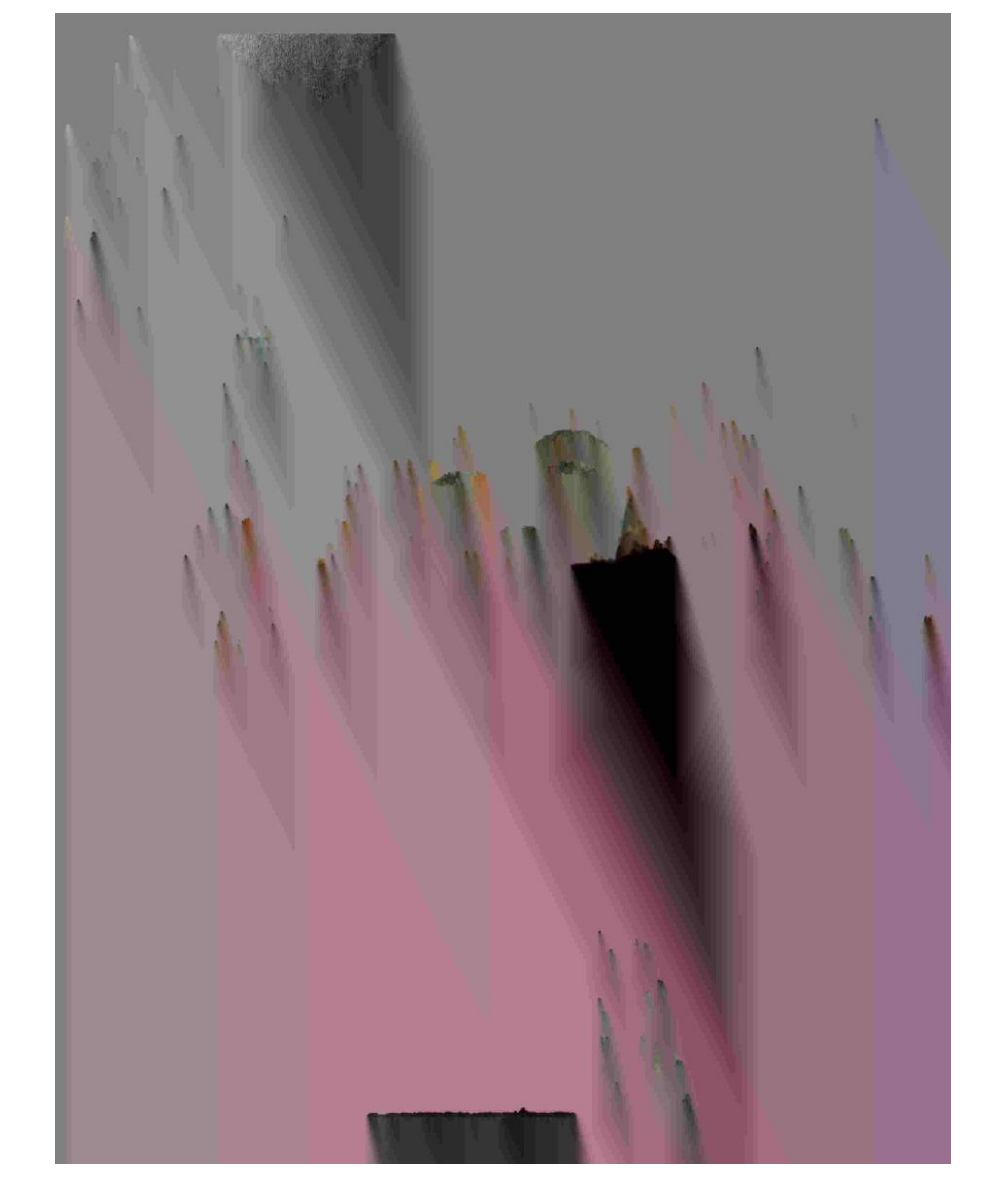
TASCHEN











Gottfried Fliedl

Gustav Klimt

1862 – 1918

The World in Female Form

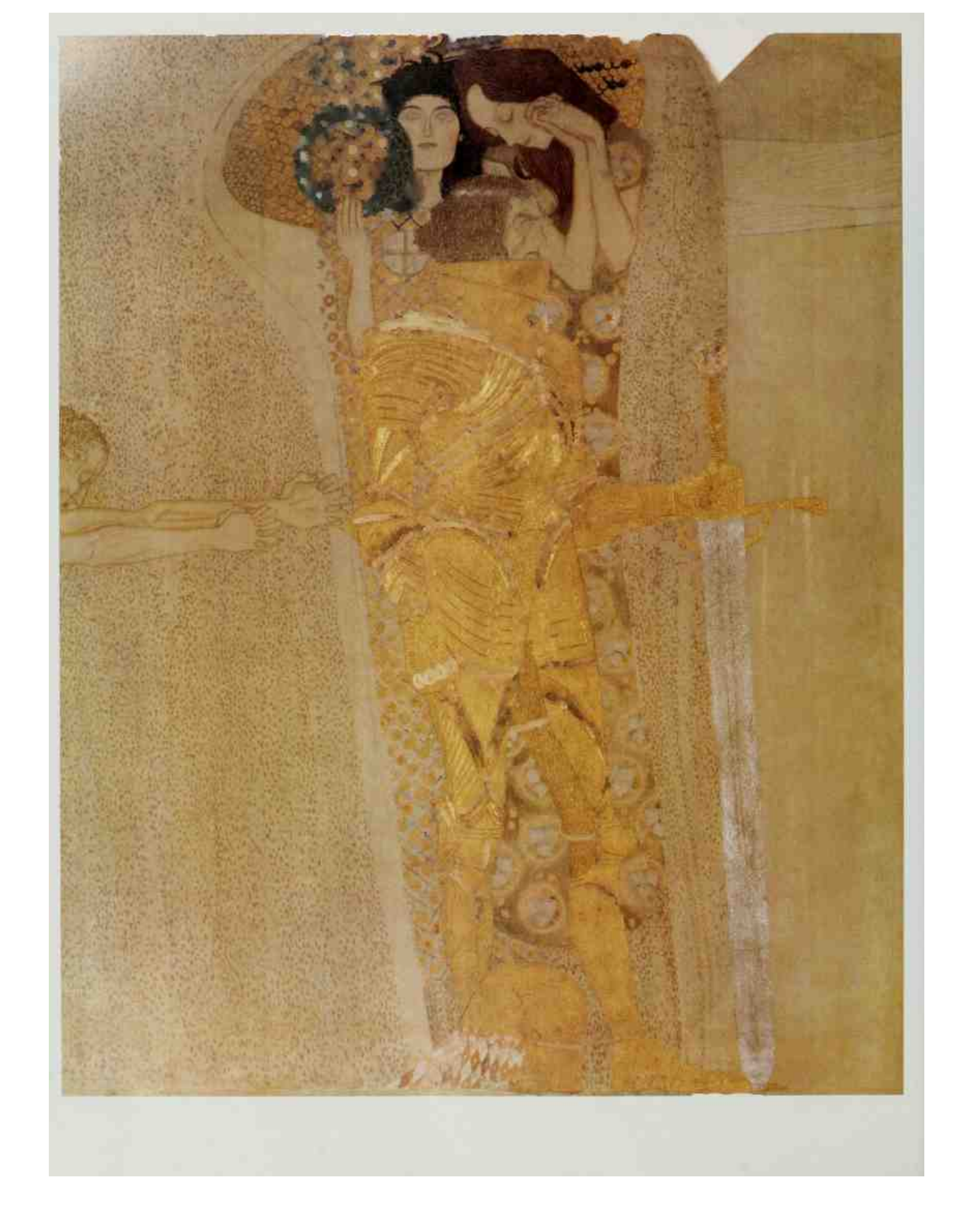
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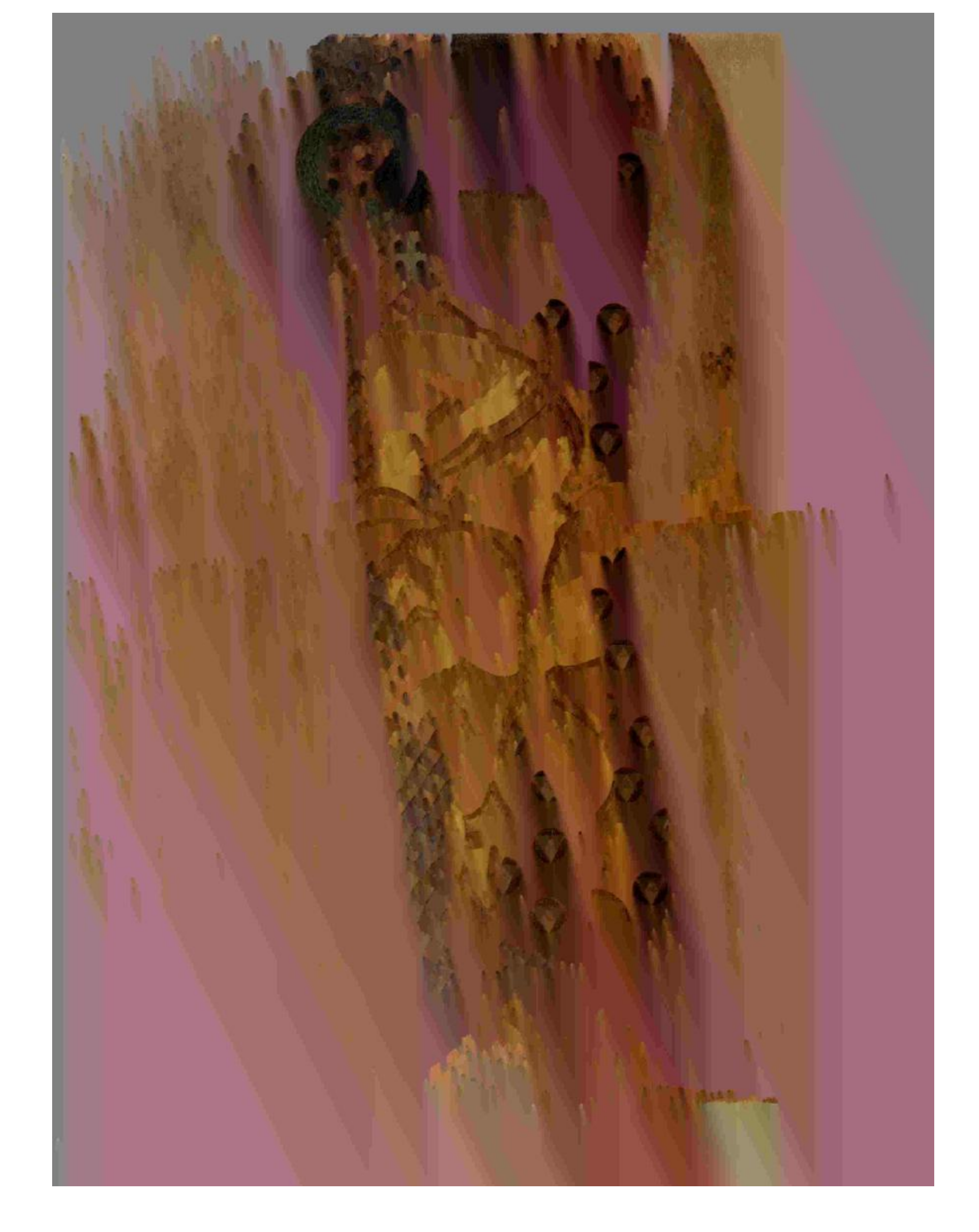
Illustration Page 2:
Lady with Hat and Feather Boa, 1909
Dame mit Hut und Federboa
Oil on canvas, 69 x 55 cm
Österreichische Galerie, Vienna

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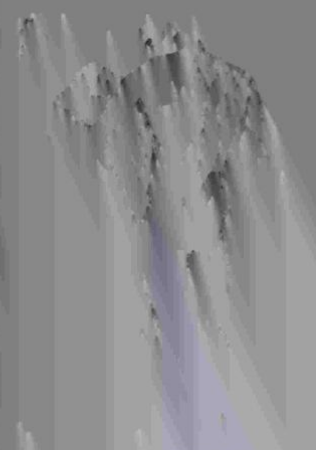
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Introduction – Klimt's Popularity



duplicated and modified many times by the mass media, has been well able to cross social frontiers. Paintings like *The Kiss* can be found as elegant decorations in typical middle-class sitting rooms and also in the form of cheap posters in students' bedsitters.

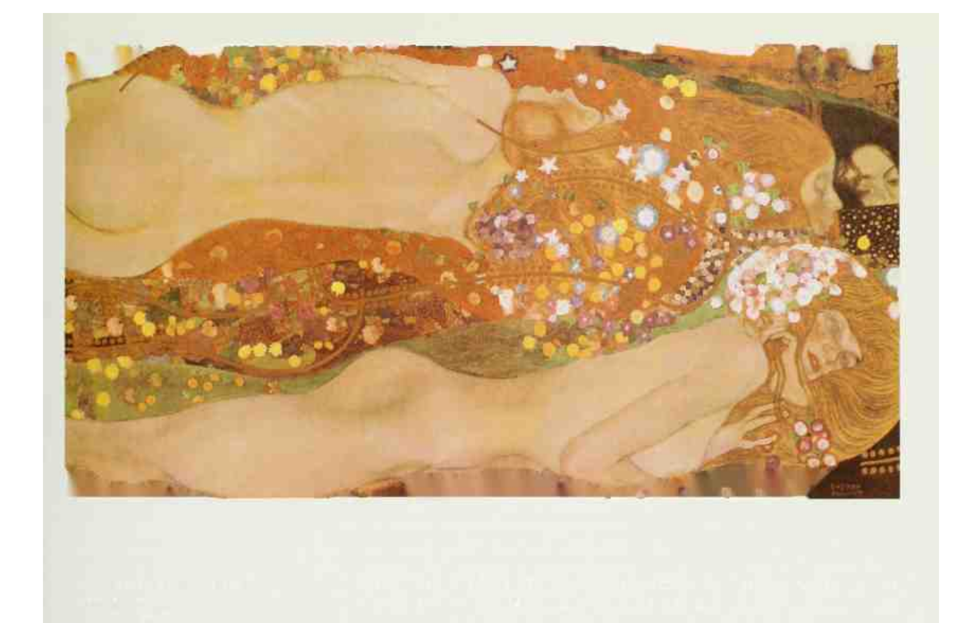
The Austrian Ministry of Education has always taken a great interest in Klimt's oeuvre as well. The purchase of his *Beethoven Frieze* in 1973 by the state and the long and costly restoration of the painting by the *Bundesdenkmalamt* – the Federal Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments – clearly show that Klimt is officially recognized as a great Austrian artist. Austria's former Chancellor Bruno Kreisky personally urged the restoration and public presentation of this mural, which had originally been created for the Viennese Secession. Using his personal influence in speeches and essays, he emphasized that the frieze was the work of an artist who had hardly been recognized at all at the time and who was finally being honoured as a genius.

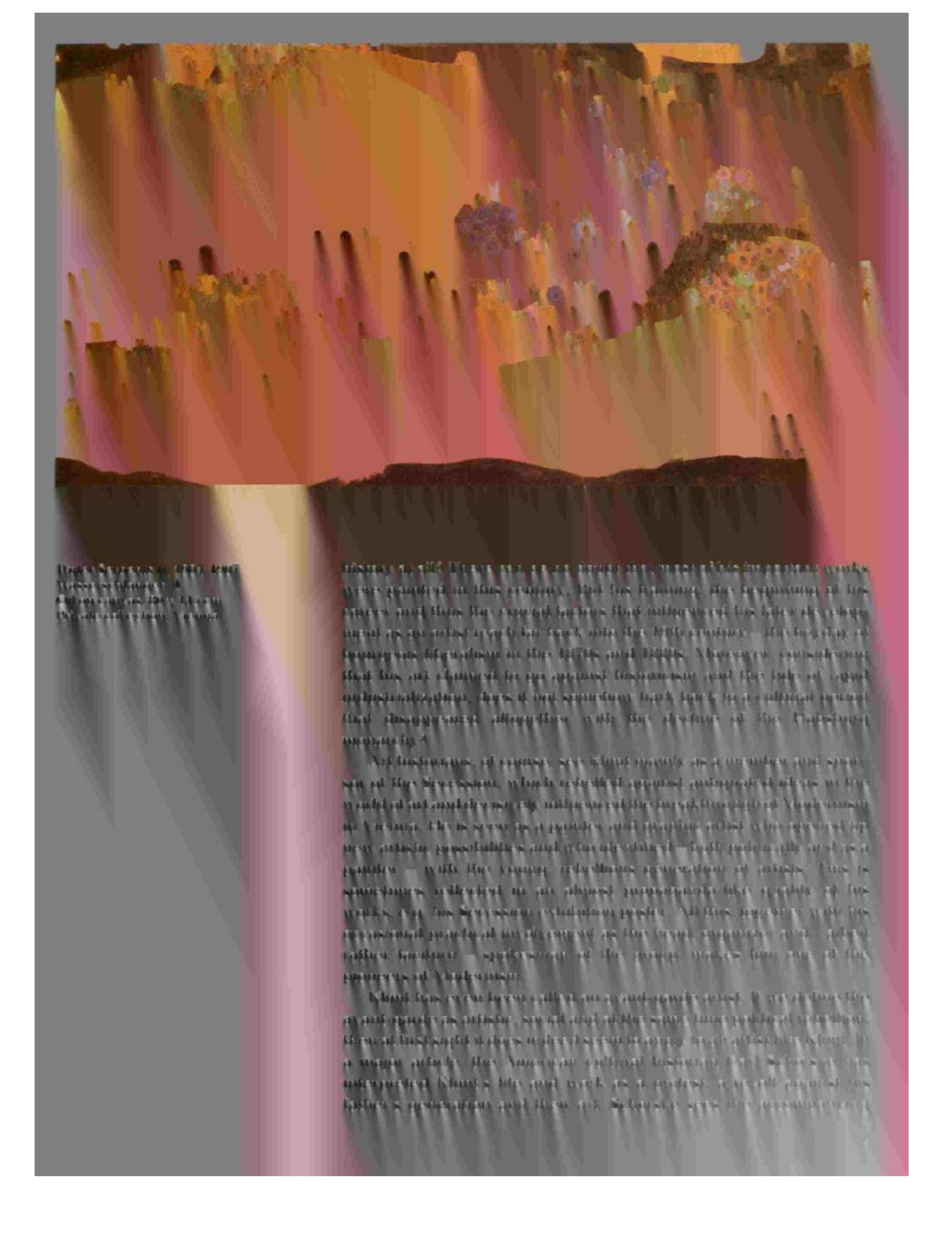
While it was being restored, the frieze was also copied in scale, for the purpose of various exhibitions. This procedure meant that the original became a self-contained monument. Initially it had only served as part of a larger exhibition that was planned as a work of art in itself. After the Secession exhibition it would simply have been discarded, so it was produced very cheaply. Since then, however, it has become a lasting artistic monument and has returned to its original place, the Secession building. However, it is no longer in the main hall, which is still used for special exhibitions of the Secession, but has been given a separate room in the basement.

All this evidence of Klimt's popularity makes it seem doubtful whether he should really be counted among the ranks of the great Modernists (whom he probably surpasses as far as the number [illegible] of his paintings goes). Names like Duchamp, Malevich, Mondrian and Magritte stand for epoch-making changes and exemplary developments in Modernist art. It is difficult to say if the same is true for Klimt and whether his art, too, contains new, pioneering artistic options with new, radical insights into reality.

When Hans Hollein staged his spectacular exhibition *Dream and Reality* (Vienna 1985), Klimt's main works provided some of its focal points and *The Kiss* was almost displayed like an object of worship. However, in the context of this juxtaposition of *Dream* and *Reality*, nobody would have wanted to see Klimt's art as part of *Reality*. Although he witnessed the disastrous breakdown of an empire and the end of the world represented by an entire culture, his work is far more the esthetic reflection of [illegible] society than a critical, [illegible] of the [illegible] Habsburg monarchy. Even during his lifetime he was simply regarded as decadent – a typical representative of the decay and decadence that prevailed at the turn of the century. With the renewed interest in the culture of the declining Habsburg monarchy, this assessment of Klimt has disappeared almost altogether.

However, when we enquire into Klimt's position as an artist, we should ask a further question: does Klimt fit into 20th-century art





dismiss as old fogey [illegible] most of his important works were painted in this century. But his training, the beginning of his career and thus the crucial factors that influenced his later development as an artist reach far back into the 19th century – the heyday of bourgeois liberalism in the 1870s and 1880s. Moreover, considering that his art climaxed in an [illegible] and the ideal of total aestheticization, then it [illegible] back to a cultural ground that disappeared altogether with the demise of the Habsburg monarchy.[4]

Art historians, of course, see Klimt mainly as a founder and spokesman of the Secession, which rebelled against antiquated ideas in the [illegible] and undeniably influenced the breakthrough of Modernism in Vienna. He is seen as a painter and inspiring artist who opened up new artistic possibilities and who identified – both politically and as a painter – with the young, rebellious generation of artists. This is sometimes reflected in an almost programmatic quality of his works, e.g. his Secession exhibition poster. All this, together with his occasional practical involvement as the [illegible] – spokesman of the group, makes him one of the pioneers of Modernism.

Klimt has even been called an avant-garde artist. If one defines the avant-garde as artistic, social and at the same time political rebellion, then at first sight it does indeed seem [illegible] Klimt. In a major article the American cultural historian Carl Schorske has interpreted Klimt's life and work as a protest, a revolt against his father's generation and their [illegible]. Schorske sees the [illegible]

analysis as a 'crisis of the liberal ego', a personality crisis which left deep traces in Klimt's work. However, we will see that the alliance of Secessionist artists and state politics – which only lasted a few years anyway – was politically conservative, mixed with a need of artistic change, so that it cannot be viewed as progressive or liberal in its concept except in a very limited sense. It was part of the paradoxical situation in Vienna at the time that the state was experienced [illegible] as a machine was still uncompromised by all political antagonisms. However, this soon turned out to be a mistake. The Austrian minister of education, in particular, was convinced that art could express the concept of the state – its unity and that of the nations – in an unbroken form, irrespective of all antagonistic crises. Many artists, including Klimt, [illegible] politically [illegible] and allowed themselves and even their future ambitions to become subservient to this concept of the state and, occasionally, also to the monarchy.

Apparently, then, there was considerable antagonism between commitment to aesthetic rebellion and a liaison with the ruling culture, between avant-gardists and decorative artists, who had only been in disgrace and were now admired and widely sponsored. The former had found their organisational backing in the Secession and [illegible] in other associations. Such antagonism poses a number of questions which will be discussed in the following chapters. Questions about Klimt's fascination, popularity and topicality lead to these very artistic and cultural problems, which are expressed in his work. They have survived and are still regarded with keen interest.

Klimt's fame is still growing. Art historians have developed increasingly accurate research methods to analyse important aspects of his work, and reproduction techniques are becoming yet more perfect, thus enhancing the sensory fascination of his paintings. Large-scale exhibitions in Venice, Vienna, Paris and New York, devoted entirely to the history of art and culture under the Habsburg monarchy at the turn of the century, have kindled a renewed interest in Klimt's work. To a large extent, his popular appeal has always been due to the art market. In the same year that he died, a large exhibition of Klimt's drawings was organised at Gustav Nebehay's gallery, and even today's great art dealers enthusiastically continue to display his work everywhere in the world.

In 1908, with the Kunstschau exhibition, Klimt was at the height of his career. The exhibition, which contained several of Klimt's works as its highlights, was described as a 'festive garment' for the artist. The magazine Die Fackel, where Karl Kraus had written a number of sarcastically caustic remarks about him, also contained an article by Otto Stoessl, in which he said: 'In spite of his brilliant gifts and his most exquisite hyper-refinement of expression, Klimt ends up in this [illegible] state of [illegible] called 'Kunst', thus showing the fate of everything that is refined and passes away with time.' Hardly ever has a critic been so wrong.

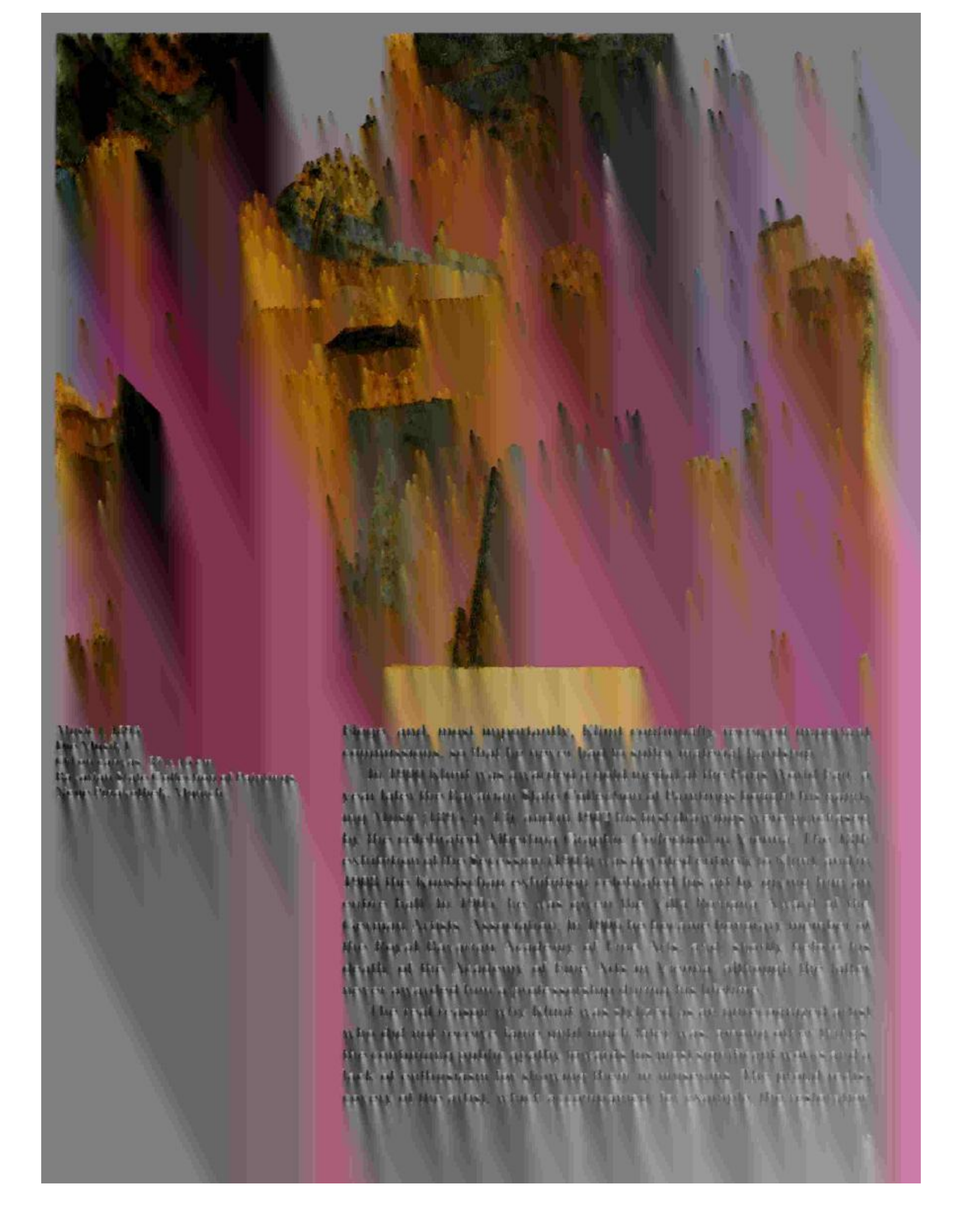
I'm not very good at the spoken or the written word, particularly when I have to say something about myself or my work. [illegible] All anyone [illegible] about me as an artist [illegible] should look attentively at my pictures and [illegible] to find out from them what I am and what I want. — [illegible]

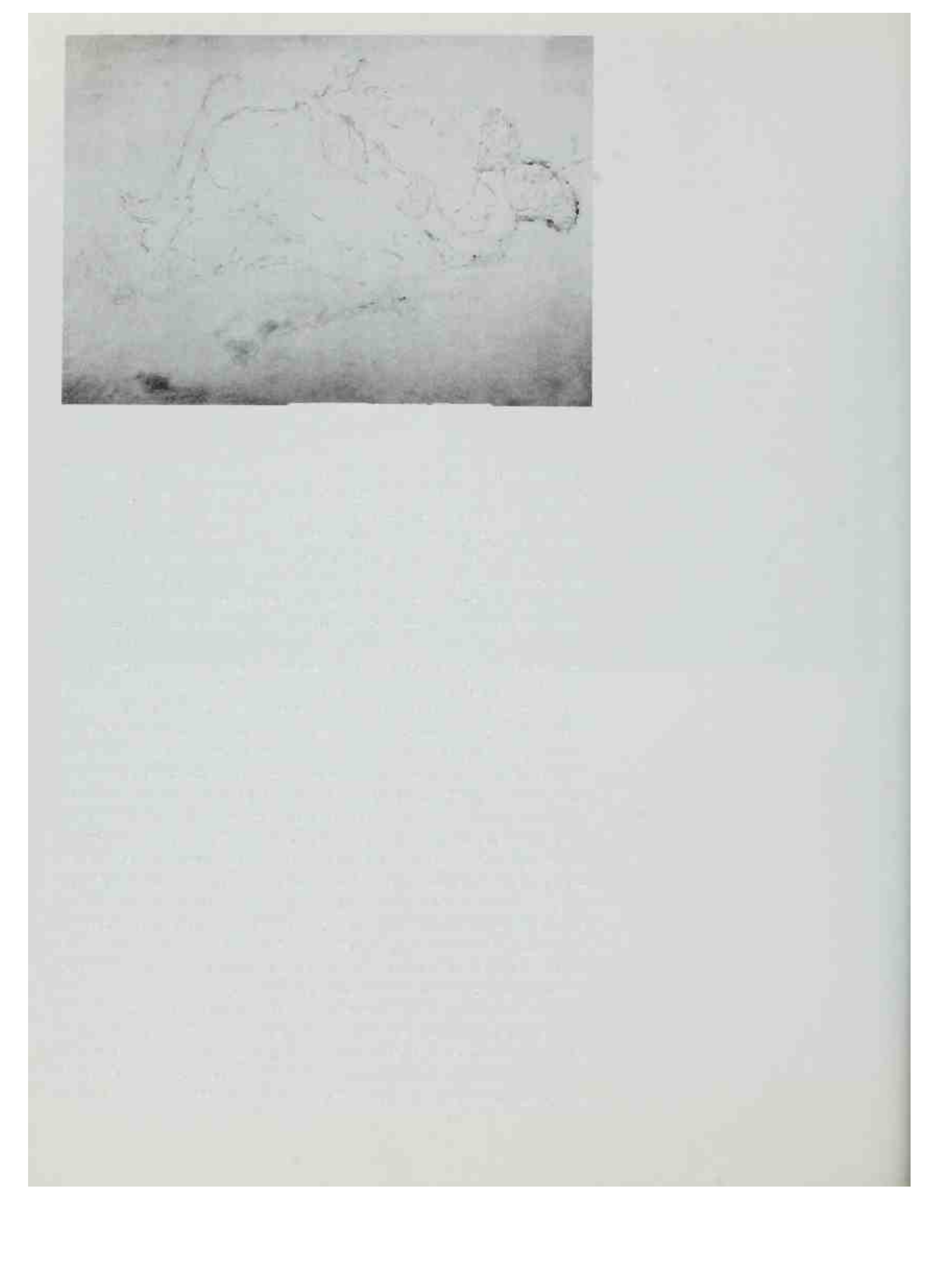


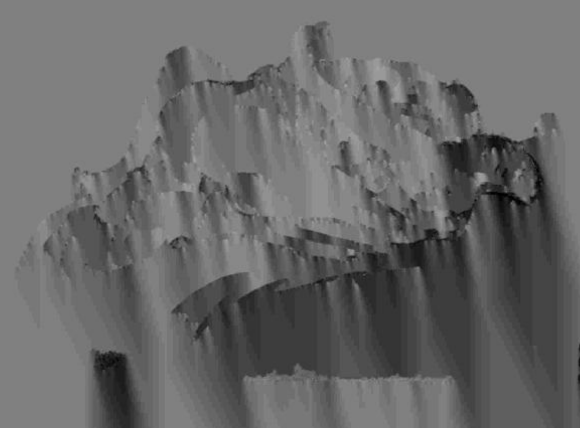












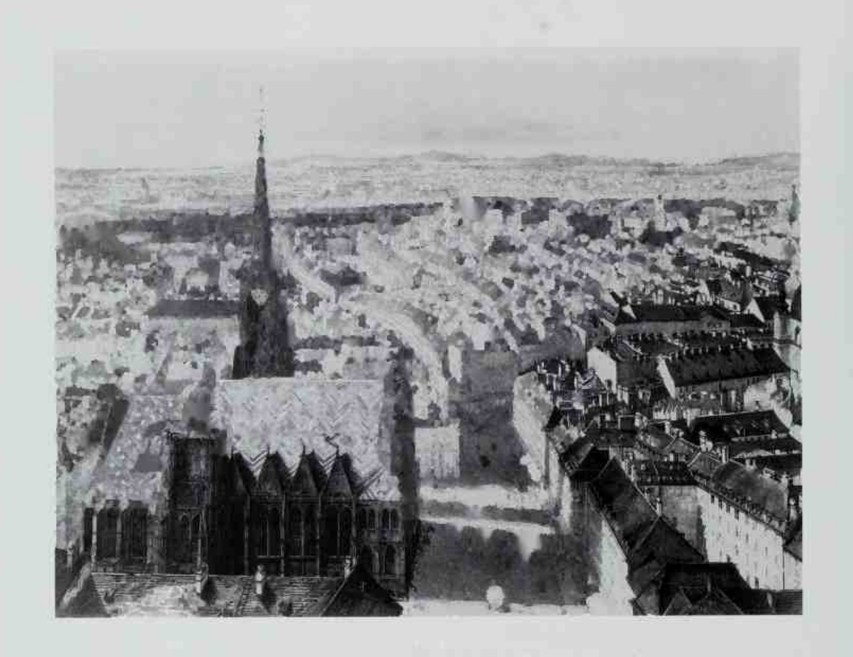
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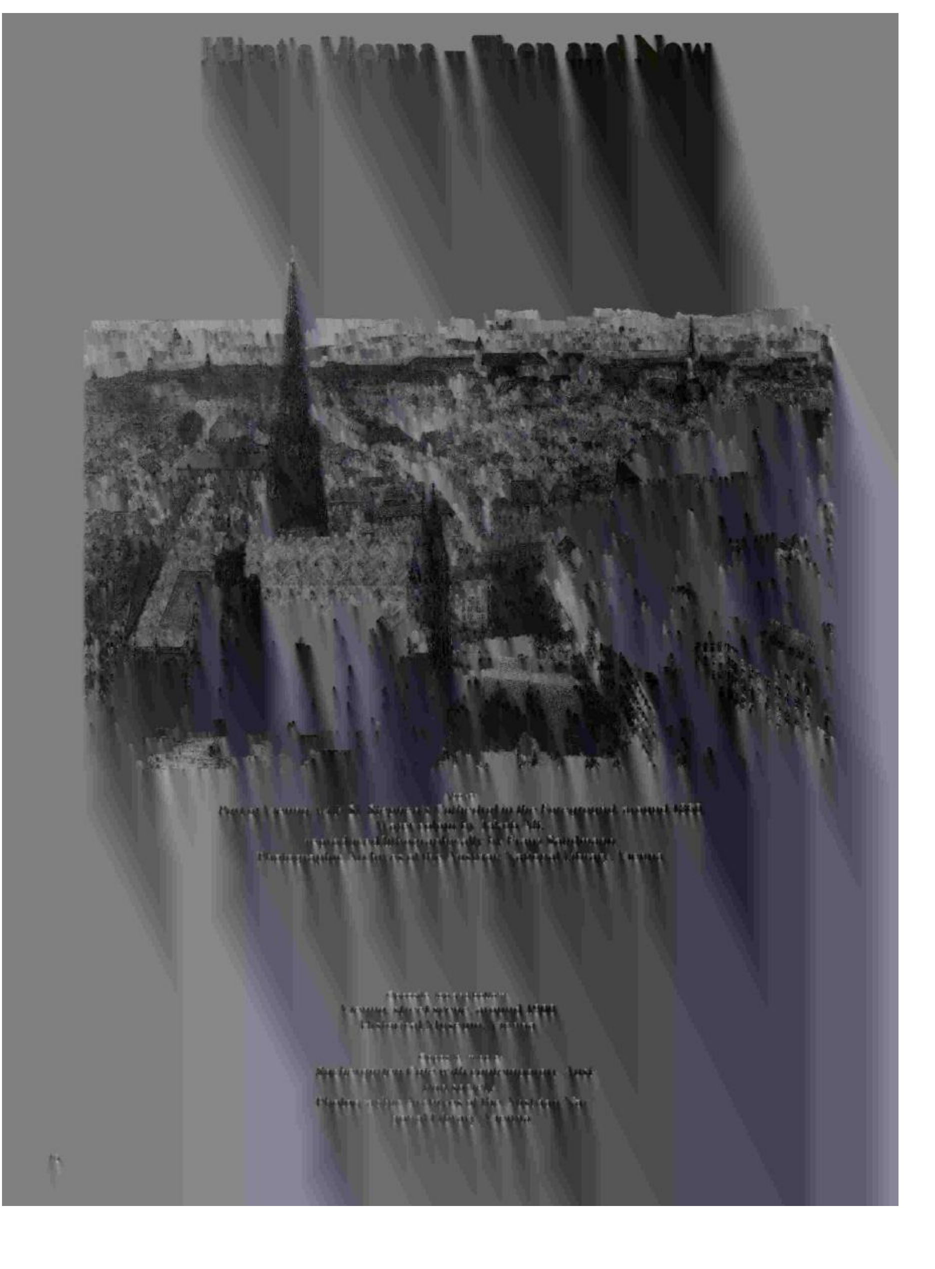
and display of his *Beethoven Frieze* (pp. 104f.) reflected not only the eagerness of politicians to boost their popularity with cultural achievements, but also their desire to make amends in a special way. Until barely [illegible] years ago nobody saw anything problematic in the fact that Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* lay [illegible], where it was gradually decaying, and even in [illegible] the city of Linz decided against spending [illegible] Austrian schillings on a portrait of Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein (p. [illegible]), which had been on loan to the Neue Galerie.[illegible]

Literary and academic interest in the artist started while he was still alive, with the first monograph published in [illegible]. In the [illegible] [illegible] an extensive rediscovery of Klimt, and since then nearly every aspect of the artist's work has been covered. Also, a whole range of exhibitions [illegible] Vienna meant that Klimt was given a degree of appreciation [illegible]. When [illegible] staged the *Dream and Reality* exhibition, a Klimt cult hit Paris and New York, [illegible] in the [illegible] Kunstforum.

However, the most important element of his fame is his reputation as a master of eroticism. [illegible] Wagner has described him as the "greatest erotic painter of his century".[illegible] Carl Schorske calls him the "[illegible] painter of women" and "[illegible] discoverer of Eros".[illegible] Alessandra Comini speaks of him as a [illegible] and says that his [illegible] work is [illegible] by an obsession with the erotic.[illegible] "Klimt was a painter of eroticism – and not among other things, but with such an intensity that the erotic element seems to exclude everything else," writes [illegible]. "[illegible] showed itself in him [illegible]."[illegible] Finally, Jacques Le Rider comments that "[illegible] is a language in the [illegible] principle which [illegible]."[illegible]

[illegible] of this [illegible] is that in the literature

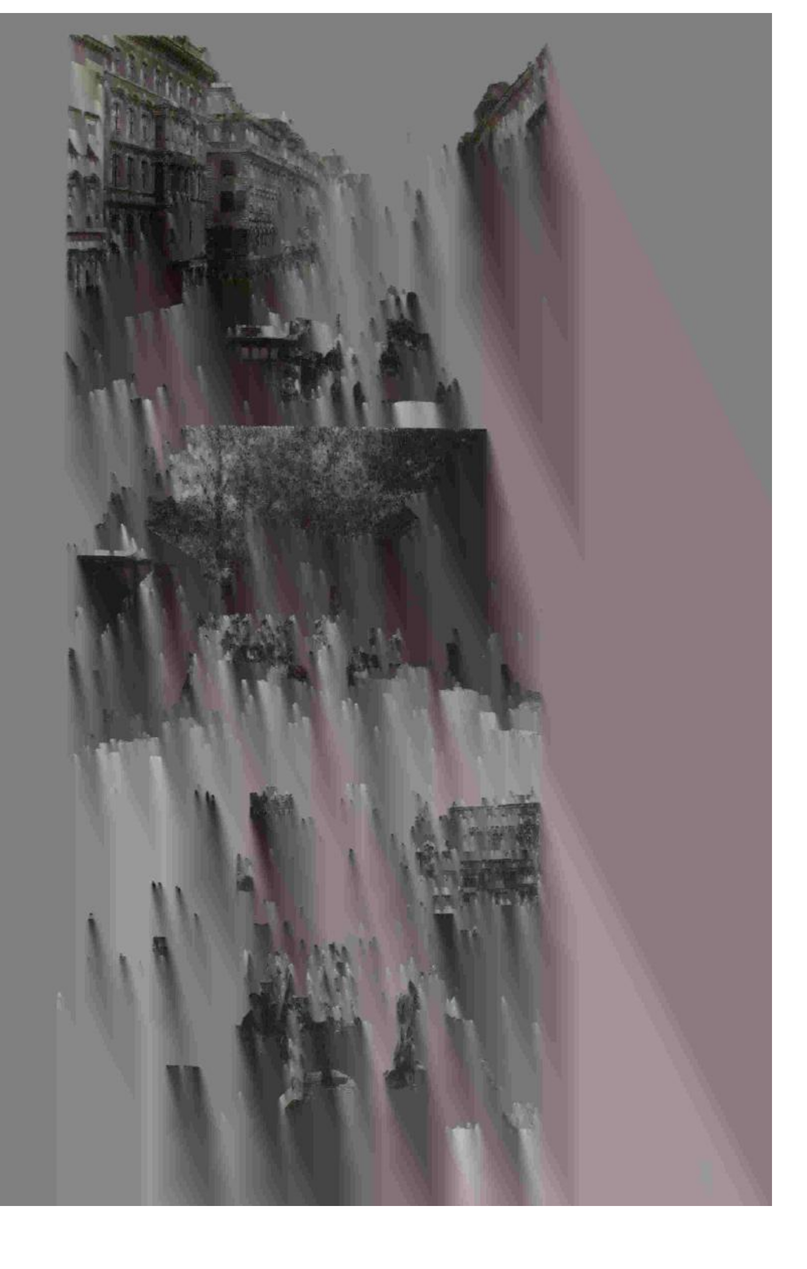


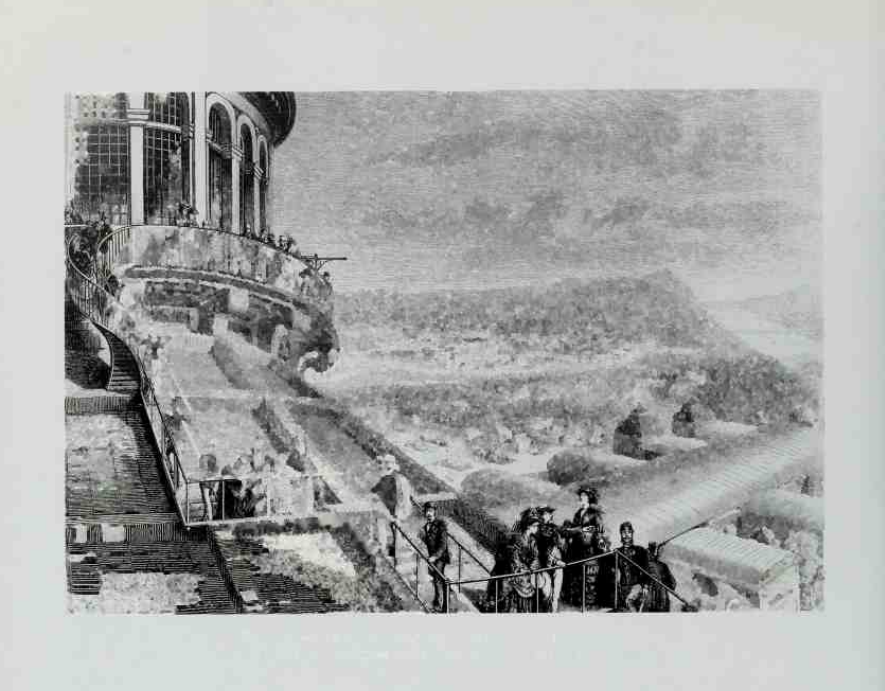

Klimt's Vienna – Then and Now

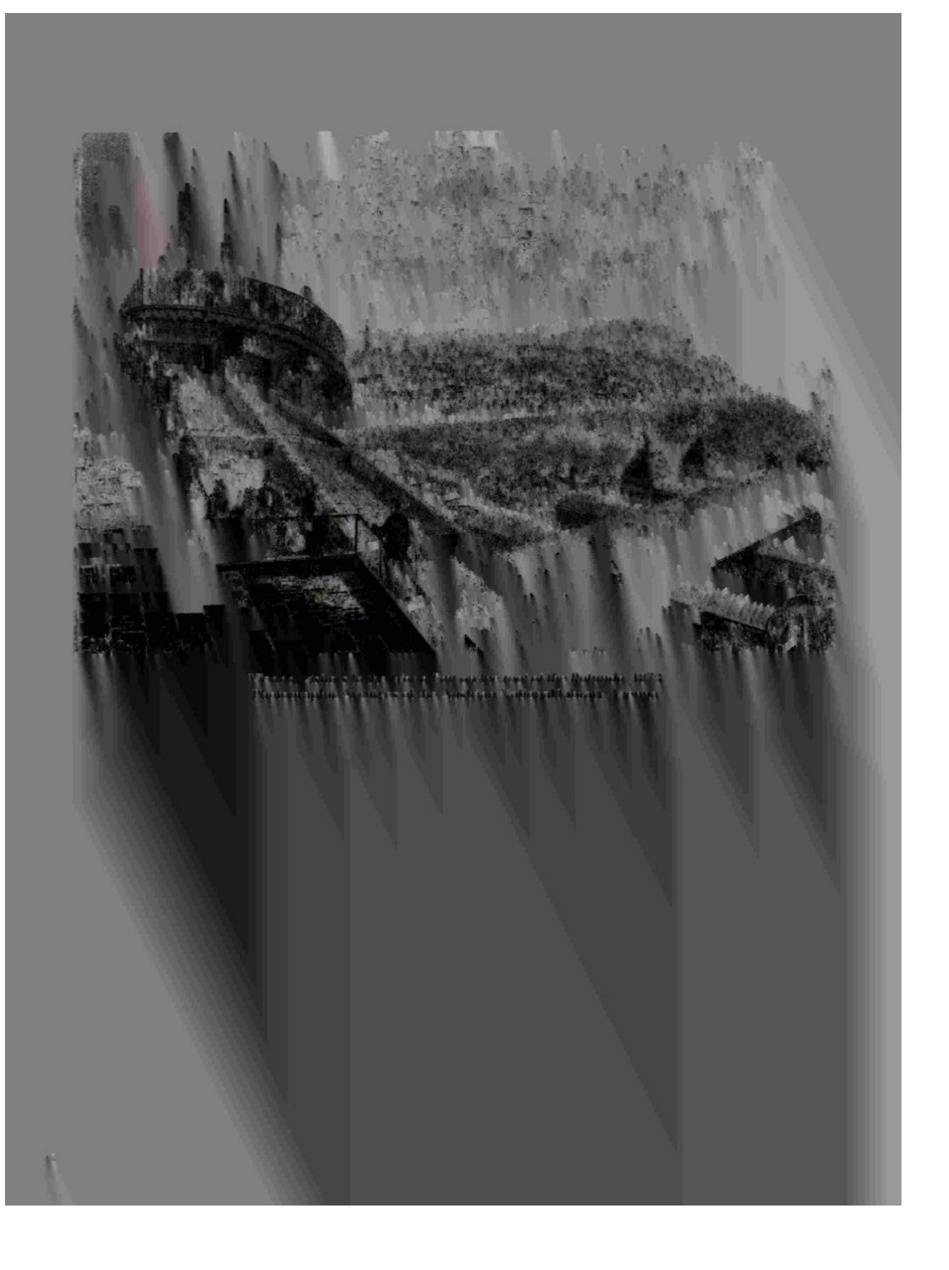




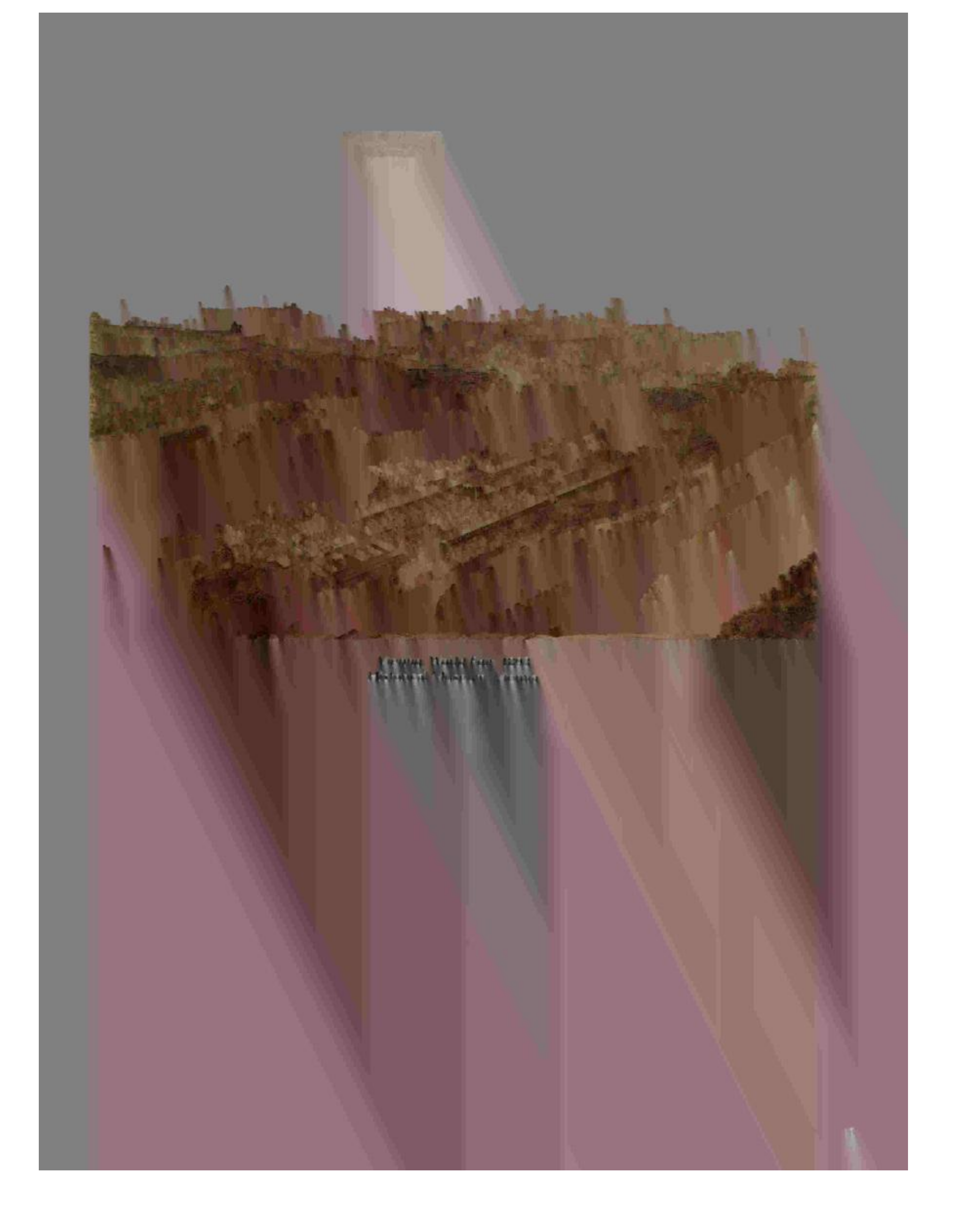




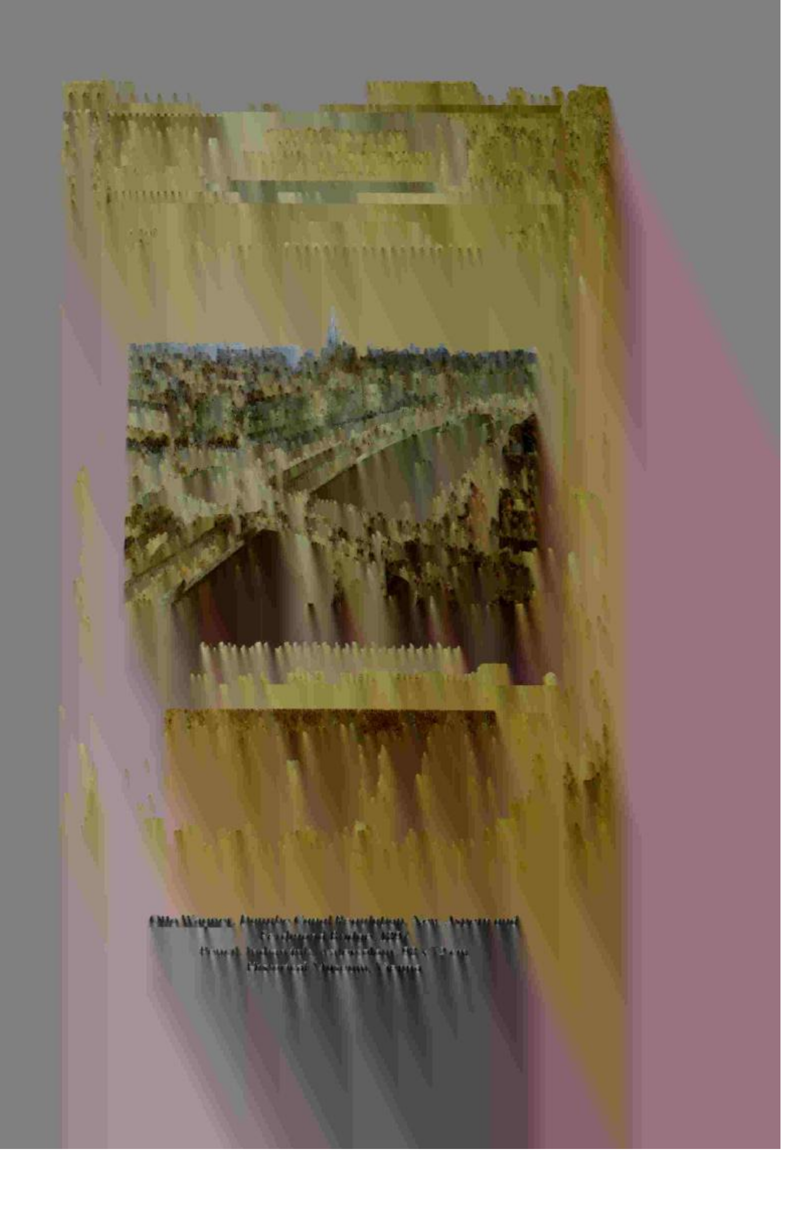




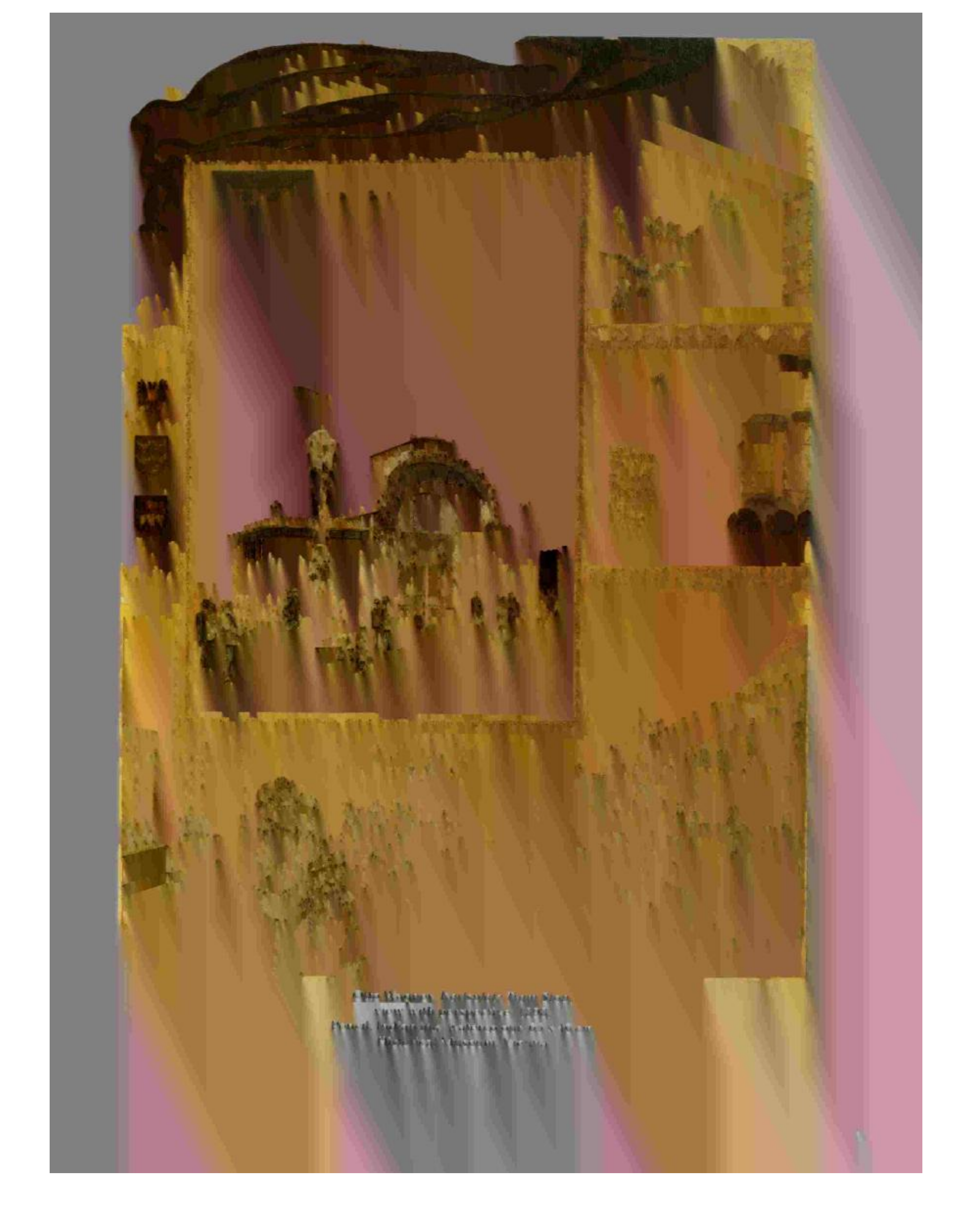


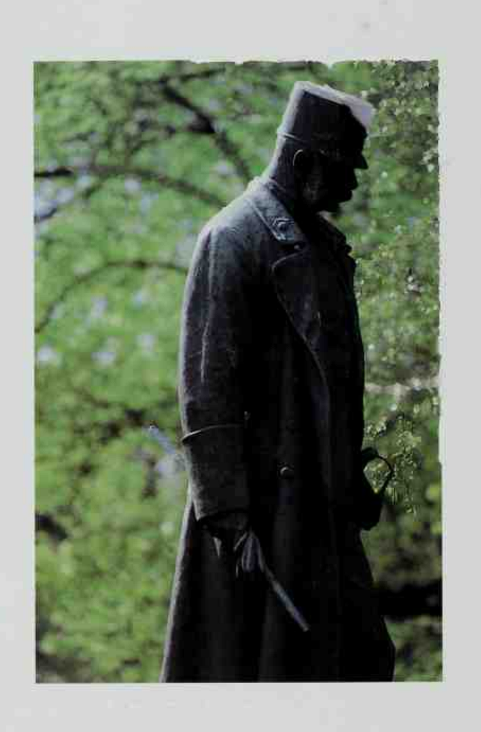


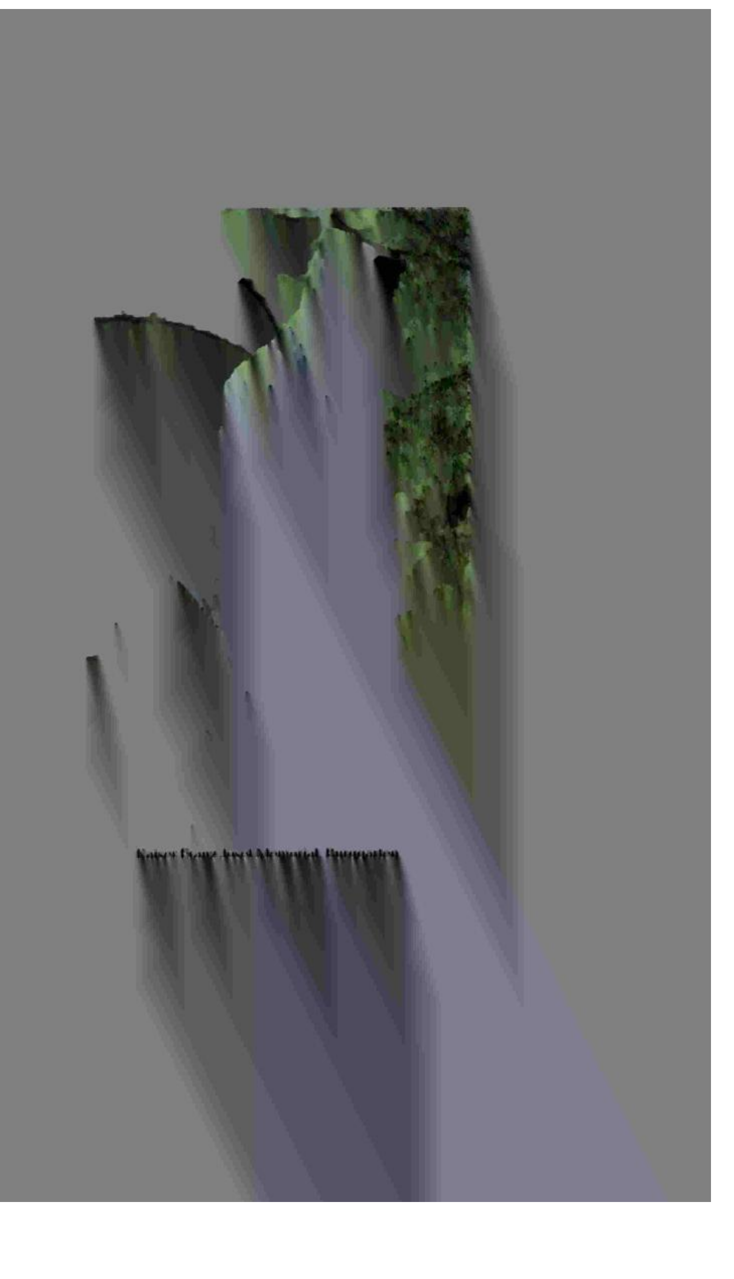




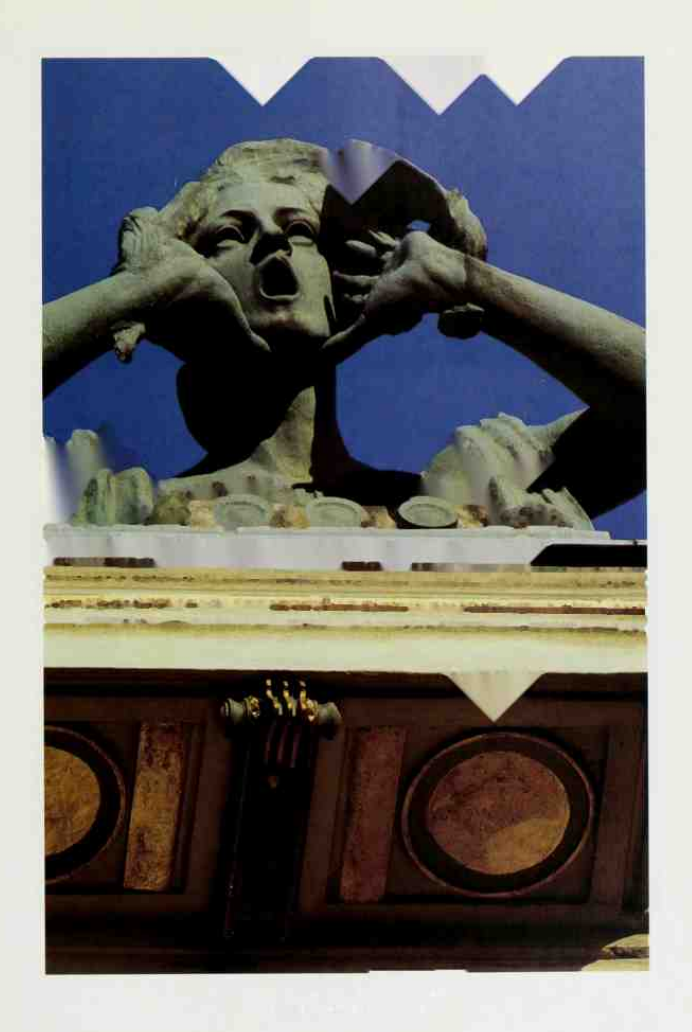

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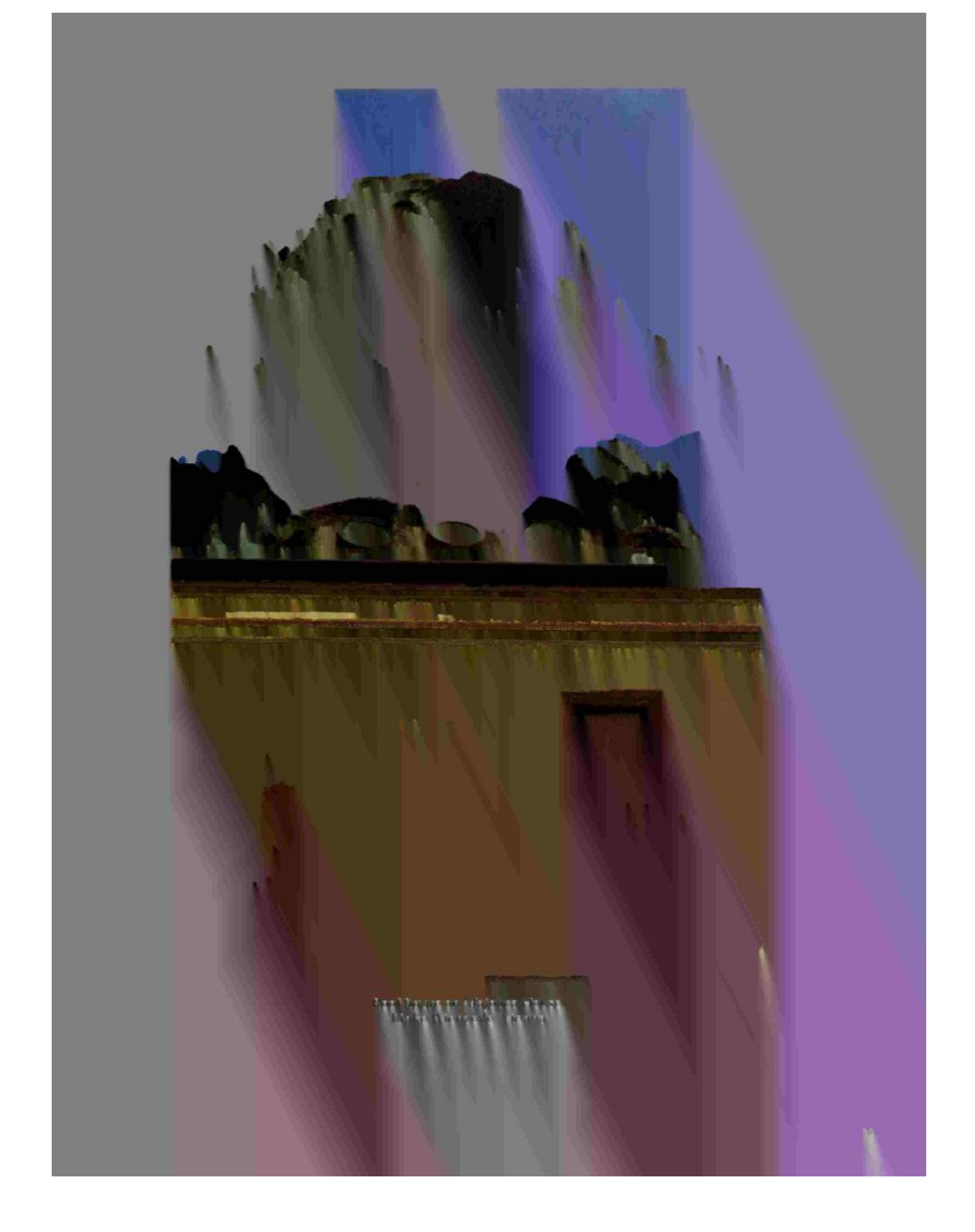






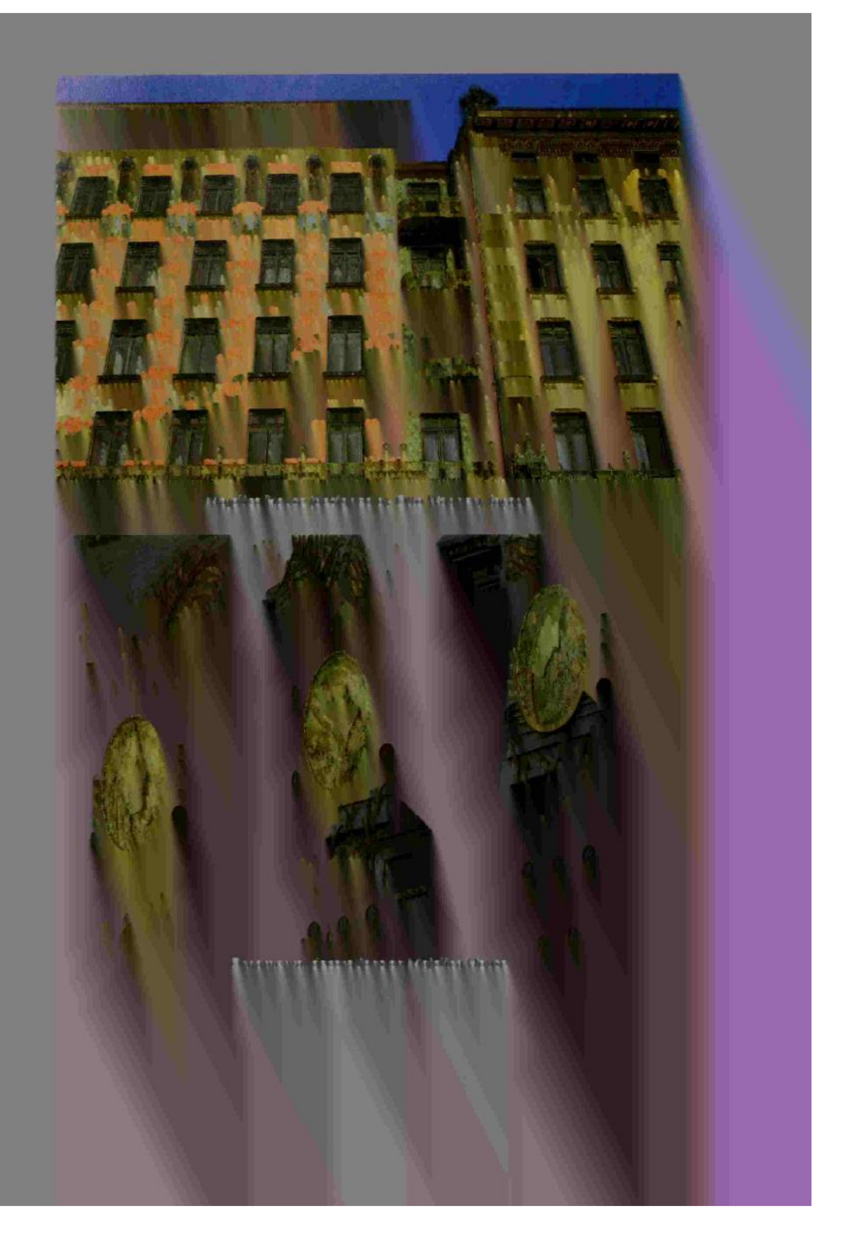
Kaiser Franz Josef Memorial, [illegible]





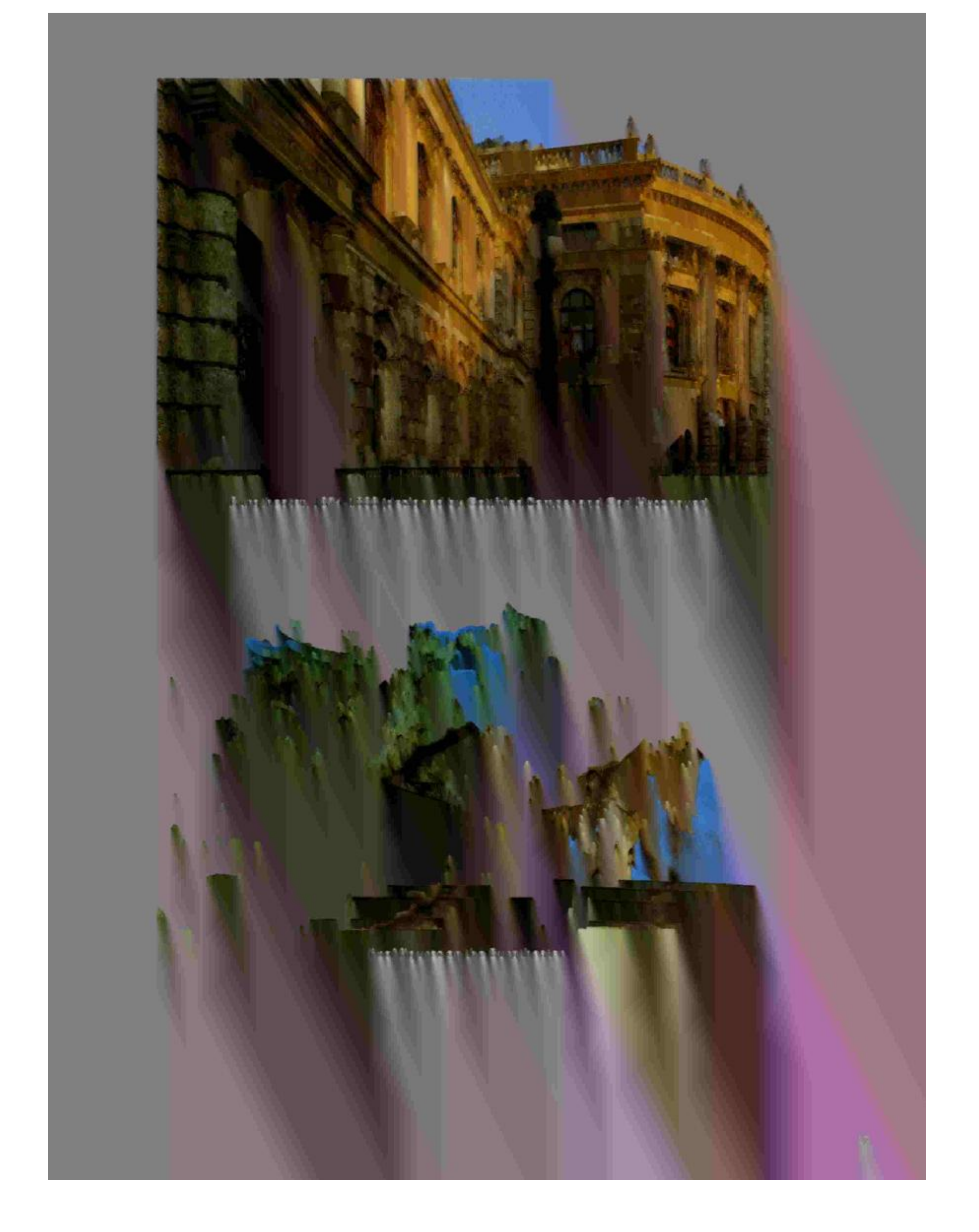




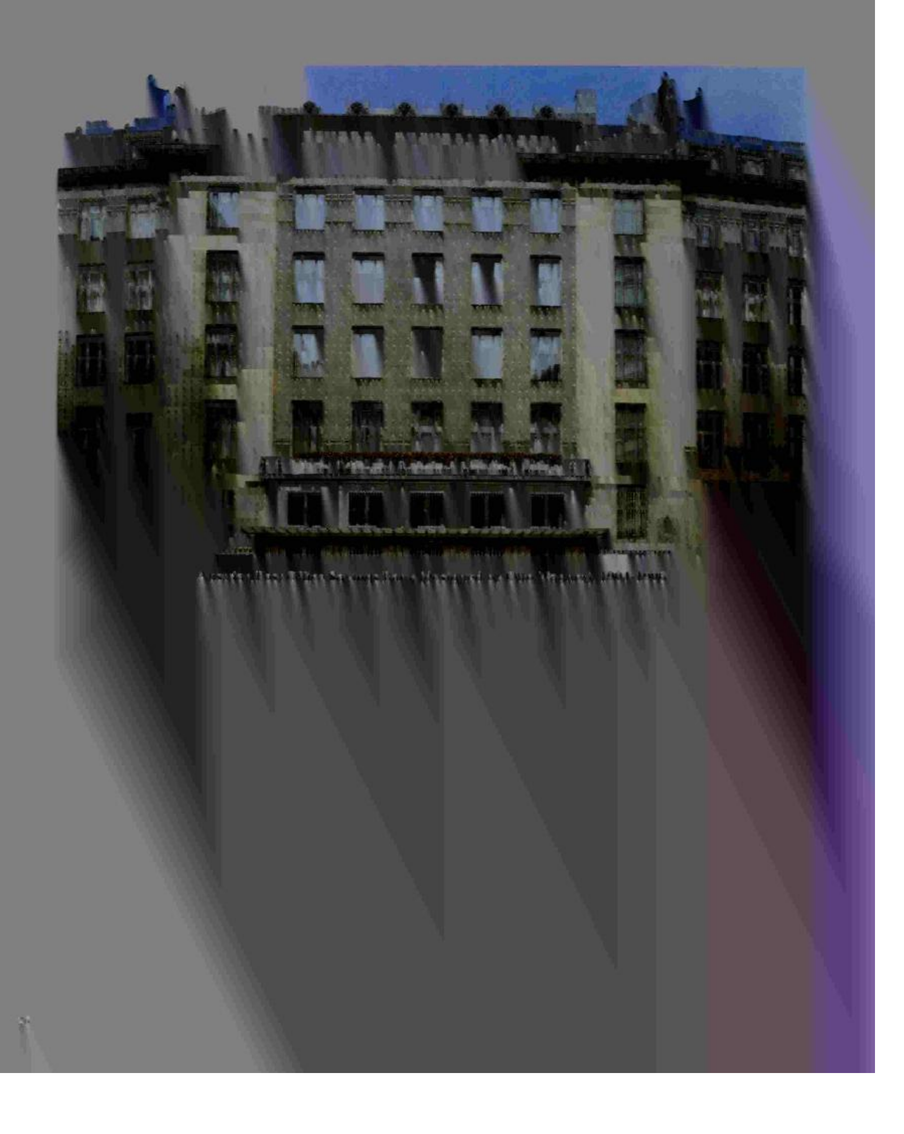








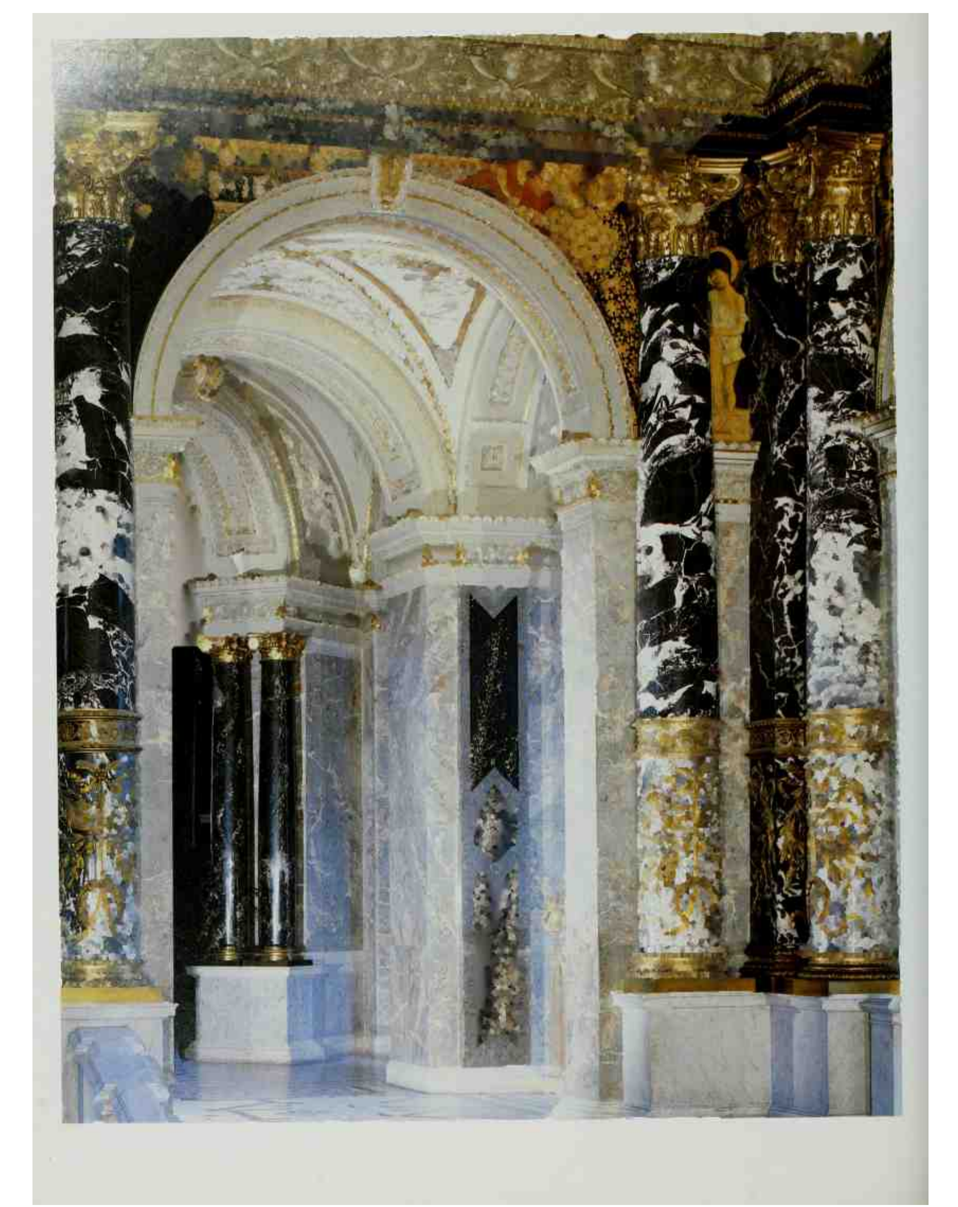


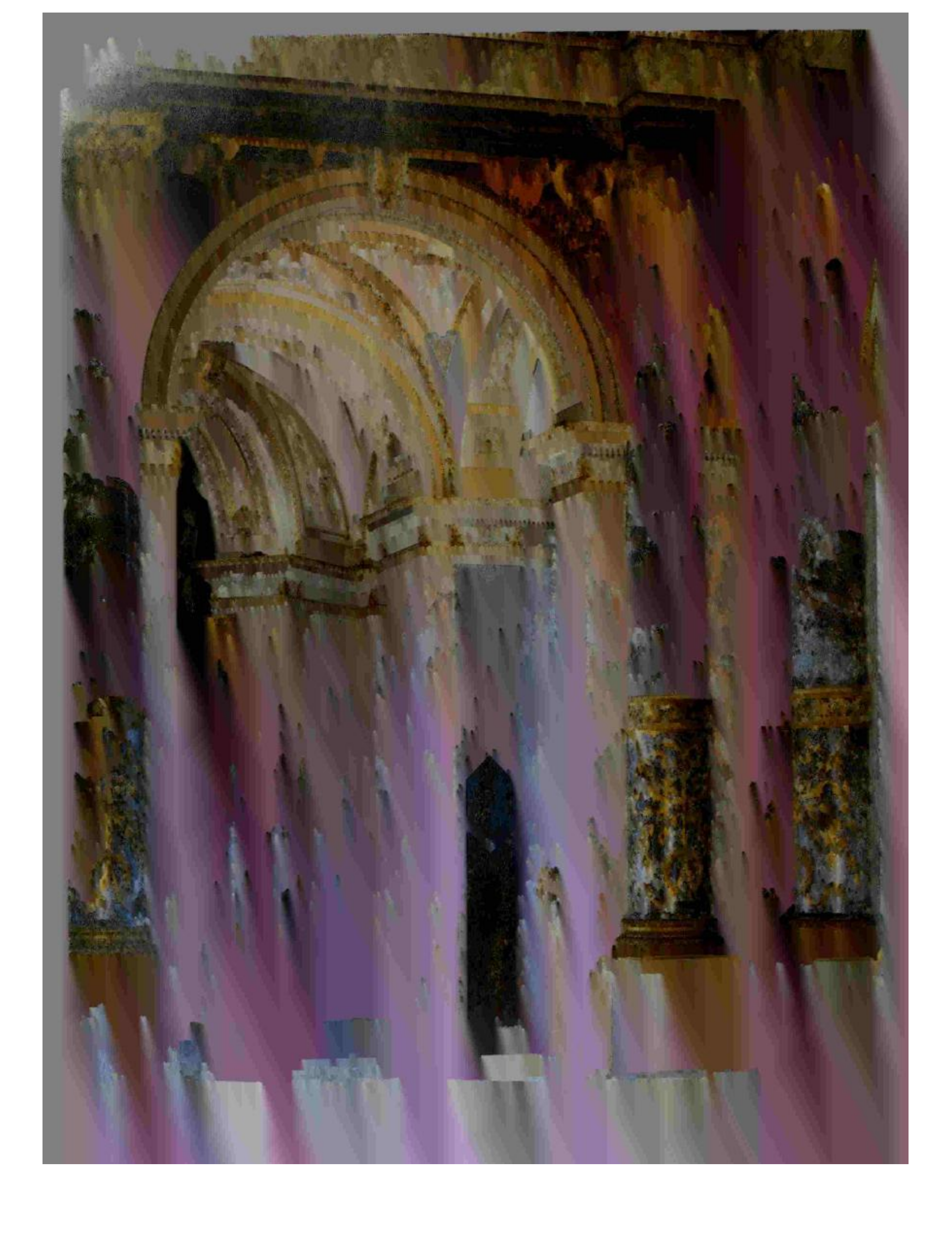


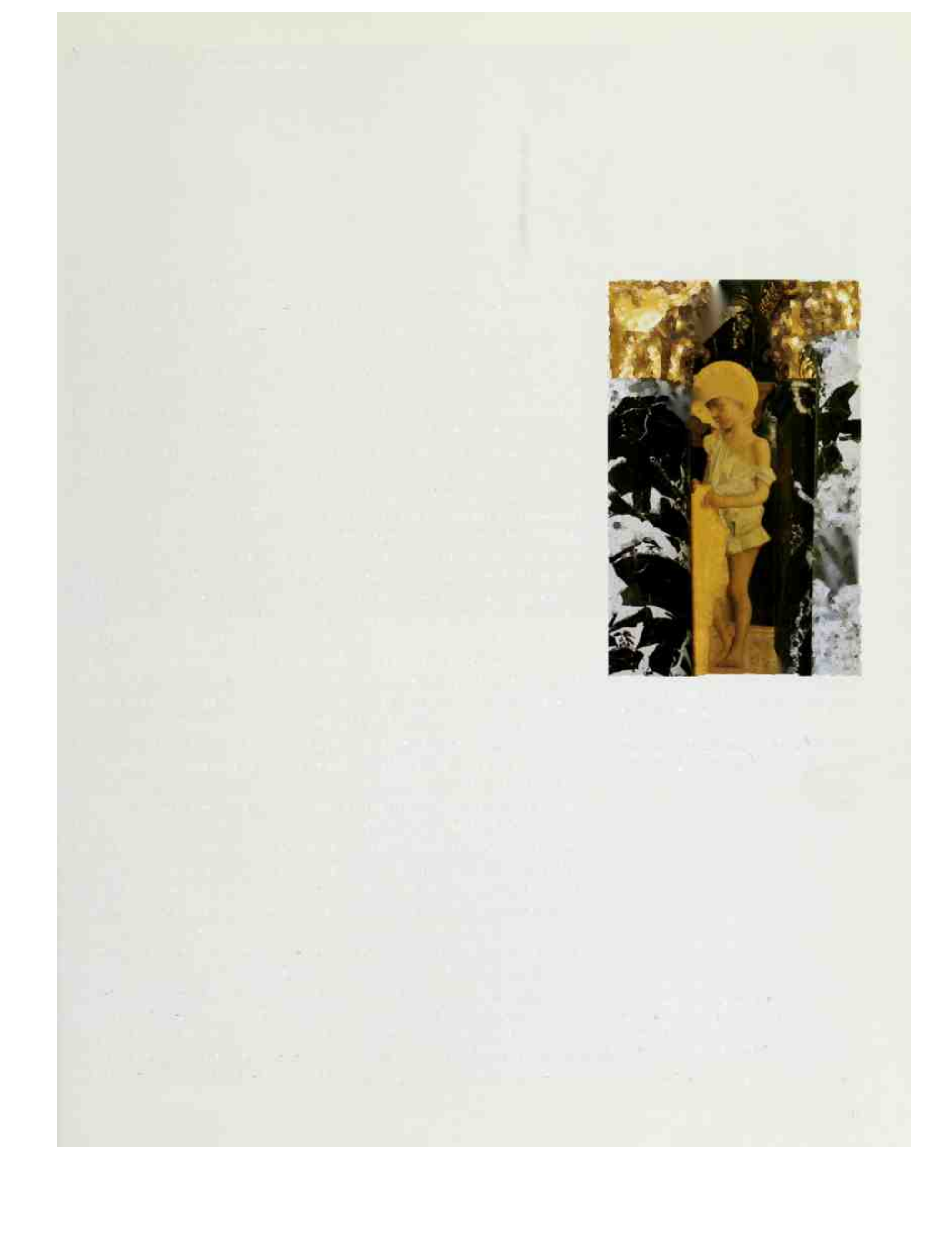
Austrian Postal Savings Bank, designed by Otto Wagner, 1904–1906.



Roof figure on the Post Office Savings Bank building







Years of Training

Klimt – who was the second child among seven – was born in Baumgarten, a suburb of Vienna, on 14 July 1862. His father, Ernst Klimt (1834-1892) was an engraver and came from a peasant family in Bohemia who had moved to Vienna when he was [illegible]. His mother, Anna Klimt (née Finster, 1836-1915), was from Vienna.

After eight years of schooling at the local Volks- und Bürgerschule in the 7th Administrative District of Vienna, Klimt joined the School of Applied Art in 1876, at the age of 14. The college was attached to the Royal and Imperial Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. Both institutions had been founded at the height of liberal politics and culture in the 1860s. After the South Kensington Museum in London, it was the first continental European museum of applied art and the first [illegible] institute in Vienna which was based on middle-class educational philosophy. It was meant to do more than display exhibits to a [illegible] public. It aimed to provide, first and foremost, visual aids and teaching for craft and industry. The most important educational aim of the museum – to raise the "level of taste" in all areas of quality manufacturing – was further promoted and strengthened with the opening of the School of Applied Art. It was to supplement the direct visual teaching on the development of art and applied art at the museum as well as its opportunities for studying artistic forms and techniques. It aimed to teach practical skills and knowledge, with a view to combining forms of industrial craftsmanship and artistic work.

These two "cultural and industrial" institutions were to affect the production processes and "aesthetic refinement" – to use the language of the time – of handicraft and industrial products. It was hoped that this would also entail an economic advantage, as an aesthetically well designed product was expected to sell better and fetch more profit on the international market. As, however, the highly specialised degree of artistic craftsmanship made the production process rather expensive, these hopes were not met. The school and the museum never had a significant and lasting influence on production.

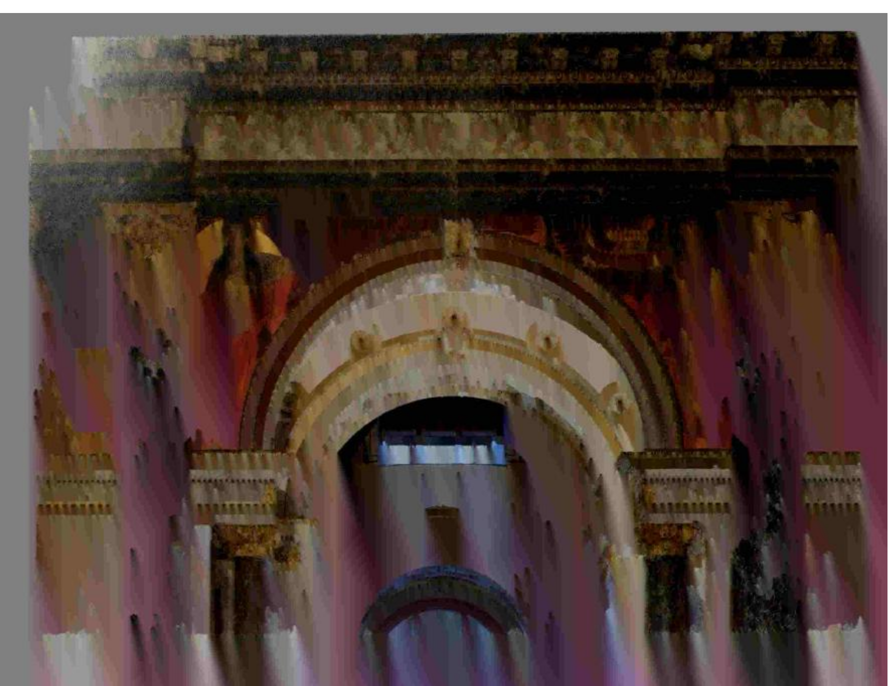
However, the growing interest in applied art was not merely a result of the newly founded school and the systematic training which it offered. In the 1860s the political clout of the liberally minded middle classes had become considerably strengthened and thus increased their cultural assurance. An increasing number of private and public buildings and works of art were commissioned by middle-class clients. Both the museum and the school served the study and development of



[illegible]

[illegible]

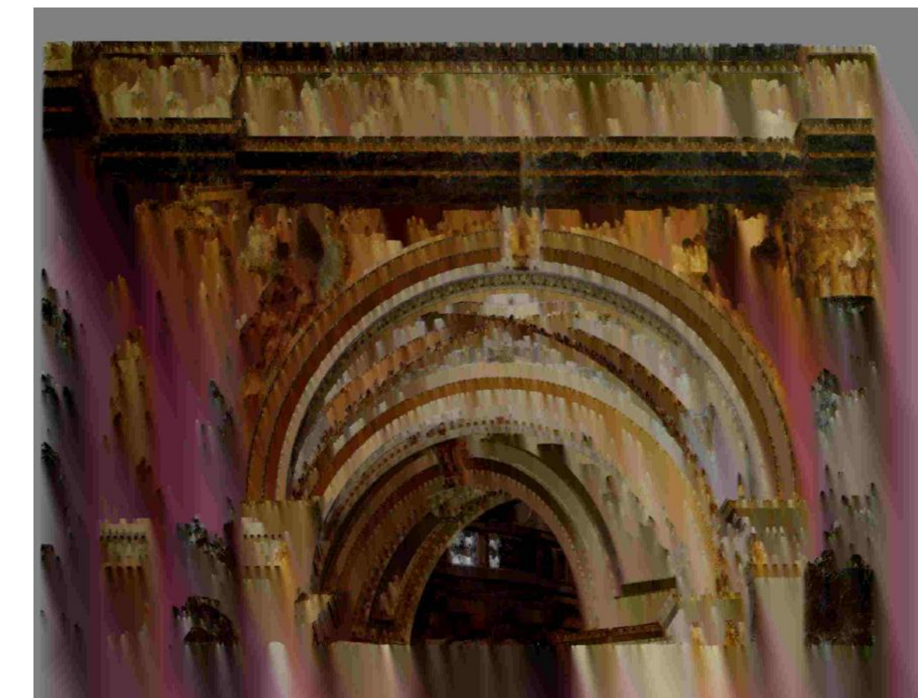




functional art forms by offering the relevant specialized range of training facilities. The great public and private Ringstrasse building projects, with their innumerable and extensive decoration jobs, offered a wide field of activities to an entire generation of artists. Indeed, Vienna's period of rapid urbanized expansion was called "The Ringstrasse Era". Many teachers and artists of the School of Applied Art were involved in [illegible] Ringstrasse projects. In their teaching and [illegible] they represented the [illegible] ideals of "eclectic" historicism which made use of a variety of historical styles. Although Vienna was dominated by the Italian Renaissance style during the 1860s and 1870s. Together with other impressive governmental and educational institutions, the School and Museum of Applied Art were also situated on the Ringstrasse.

At first, Klimt attended the obligatory preparatory classes of the School of Applied Art, where he was taught by Michael Rieser, Ludwig Minnigerode and Karl Hrachowina. [illegible] practiced ornamental drawing, copying three-dimensional and flat ornaments as well as ornamental designs of [illegible]. He also drew human figures from plaster casts and paintings. Practical lessons were accompanied by lectures on projection techniques, perspective, style and other subjects. Subsequently

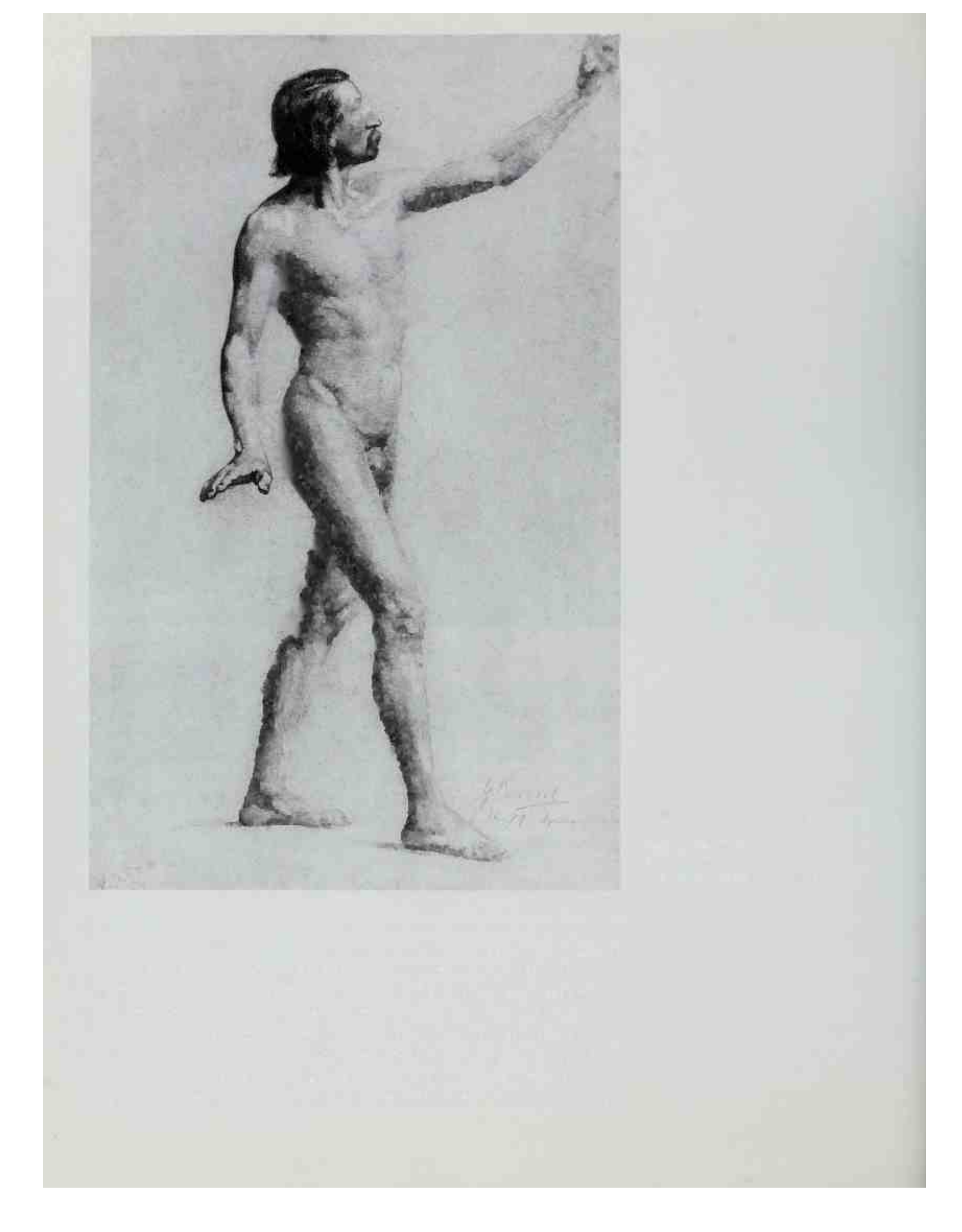


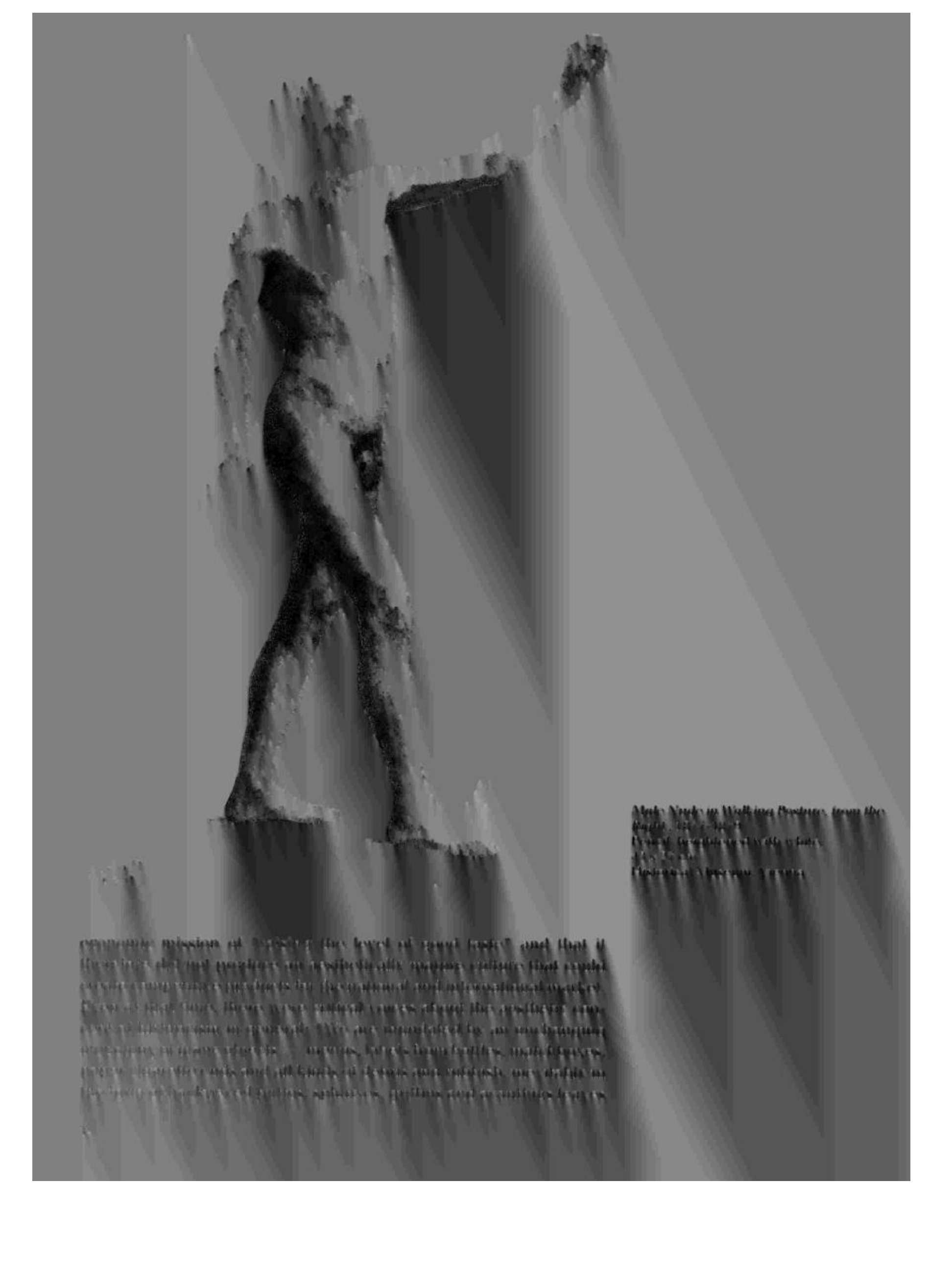


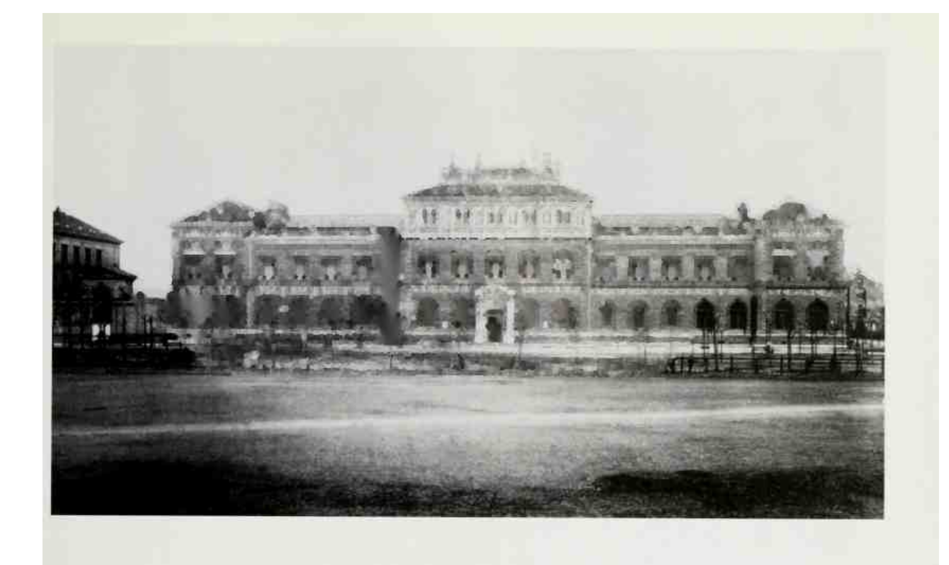
[illegible]
1890/91
Spandrel and intercolumniation
paintings
of the Kunsthistorisches Museum,
Vienna
Oil on plaster
Left spandrel/intercolumniation, 230 x 230 cm

cessfully. Klimt was promoted to the specialized painters' class under Ferdinand Laufberger and, after his death in 1881, under Julius Victor Berger, an artist working along similar lines to Hans Makart.

Klimt's brothers Ernst and Georg, who sculpted and chiselled numerous frames for his brother Gustav's paintings, were also trained at the School of Applied Art. Interestingly, in the course of the general drive for modernization at the turn of the century, many of the artists who cultivated these and subsequent artistic revolutions were either close to the school, had been trained there or were even on the teaching staff at a later stage. Until the educational reform under the Secessionist Baron Felician von Myrbach, it was considered a most important stronghold of the artistic doctrines of historicism. Teaching was dominated by the disciplined copying of originals, often involving methods of slavish Naturalism (sometimes even using photographs), and Klimt's entrance examination consisted of copying a drawing of an ancient female head from a plaster cast. Until its reform the school's teaching methods gradually [illegible] during the last two decades of its existence [illegible]. It was said that the school was a mere drawing school, that it did not prepare students sufficiently for their real jobs, that it failed to achieve its artistic and















Early Works and the Beginning of a Career

Klimt was still a student at the School of Applied Art when his teachers first recognised him as a great artistic career before the 19th century was out. Both his teachers and Rudolf von Eitelberger, the principal of the School, helped to promote his career. Together with his fellow student Franz Matsch and his brother Ernst, Klimt was asked by his teacher Michael Rieser to work with him on the stained glass windows in the Votivkirche (Votive Church), the last large building on the Ringstrasse. Thus, Rieser and Von Eitelberger supported Klimt in becoming a painter.

Klimt, his brother and Franz Matsch (1864–1942) continued to form an artists' association which they called the Künstlercompagnie, which subsequently profited from the building boom of the Ringstrasse Era. At first, this was limited mainly to the more provincial parts of the Habsburg Empire. All three found employment with a company called Fellner & Helmer, which specialised in building theatres, and were involved, among other things, in decorating theatres in Fiume, Reichenberg and Karlsbad (now Rijeka, Liberec and Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia) and Bucharest.

Even after their training, all three kept up their contact with the School of Applied Art and the head of the museum, who was highly influential on the cultural scene. A letter written by the three artists to von Eitelberger in 1884 shows very clearly their attempt to establish themselves on the Viennese art market. Diplomatically, they mentioned their faithful adherence to traditions and their efficiency as a collective which even enabled them to take on larger commissions at inexpensive prices. "High sir," they wrote among other things, "after we have succeeded in establishing a studio ... do we take the liberty, Your Honour, to submit to you, dear Herr Hofrath, a programme of our association in as brief a version as possible. ... The instructions of our teachers [illegible] Laufberger and [illegible] of such a wholesome and universal kind that we deem ourselves fortunate to have enjoyed them. In view of the fact that we were students of the same masters and they enabled us endeavours to uphold their invaluable teachings, we believe that we have embarked upon the right path, although we will of course continue to struggle with one another and seek to promote this path by means of mutual correction. ... our company activity is of considerable advantage ... as our greater creative capacity enables us to deal with commissions swiftly and the sum of our experience is constantly growing. Until now, our



[illegible] 1896
[illegible] pencil, [illegible] heightened with gold, 43 x 29 cm
Historisches Museum, Vienna

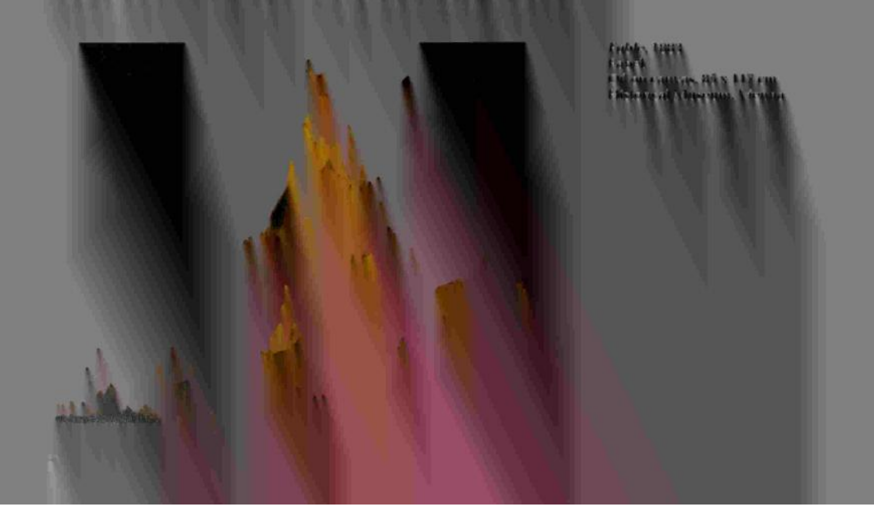
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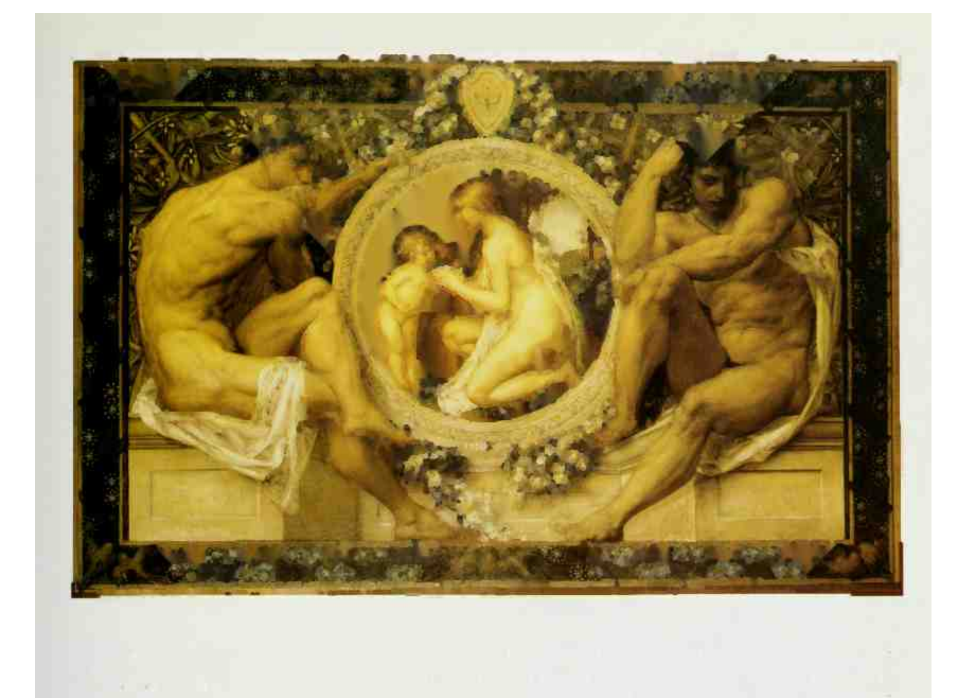
has mainly been directed at the provinces and abroad; it is becoming increasingly desirous to carry out monumental work in our capital city, and it may be that an opportunity exists at this very moment, as Vienna's new monumental buildings are approaching completion and decorative artwork in these buildings is probably only accepted in their most significant parts, so that the most excellent artists are fully occupied."

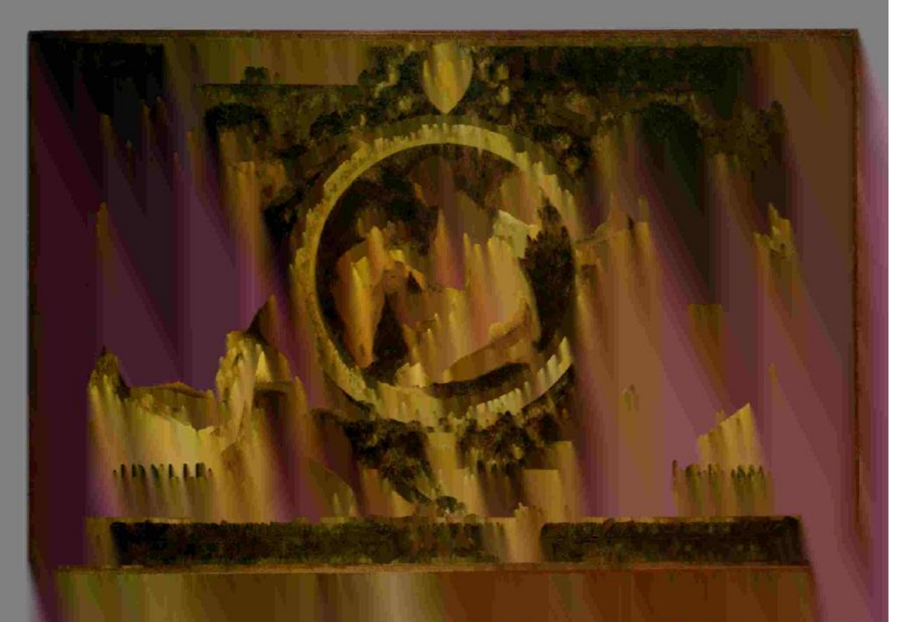
Their "desired dream" – to be involved in the great building works on the Ringstrasse – was fulfilled. From 1886 to 1888 they worked on the ceiling paintings of the two staircases of the Burgtheater. Gustav Klimt also painted his Thespian Cart, The Globe Theatre in London, The Altar of Dionysus, Theatre in Taormina and The Altar in Venus. The Künstler-Compagnie also helped decorate the staircase of the Court Museum of Art History, where Klimt had already been asked to assist with work by his brother Leopold. The decoration of the large staircase of the museum was meant to glorify the hierarchy by showing the generosity of imperial patronage, while at the same time serving as a self-representation of the bourgeoisie. Originally the work was to be carried out by Hans Makart, but his untimely death prevented the completion of his work. The Künstler-Compagnie was asked to paint the spandrels and intercolumniation between the columns (pp. 20-1) in accordance with a programme designed by Albert Ilg, the principal of the applied art collection of the museum. At the same time, they were to keep very strictly to the spirit of historicism, to follow historical examples in all their details and to study the exhibits of the museum.

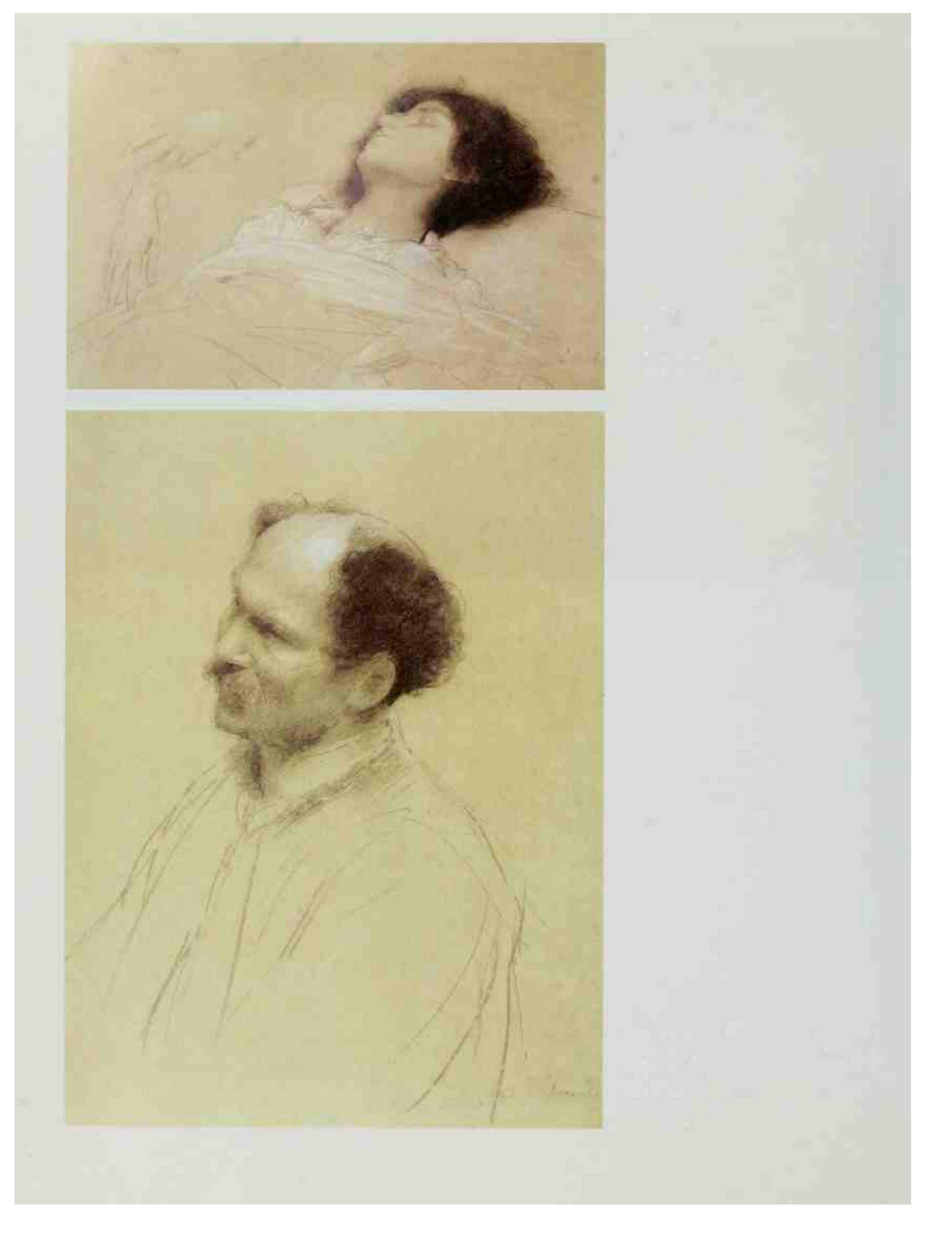
Both jobs confronted Klimt and the other two painters with the optimism and built-in progress of middle-class liberalism. The three-dimensional decorations on the facades of the two museums as well as the cycles of paintings which Klimt helped to create served to glorify

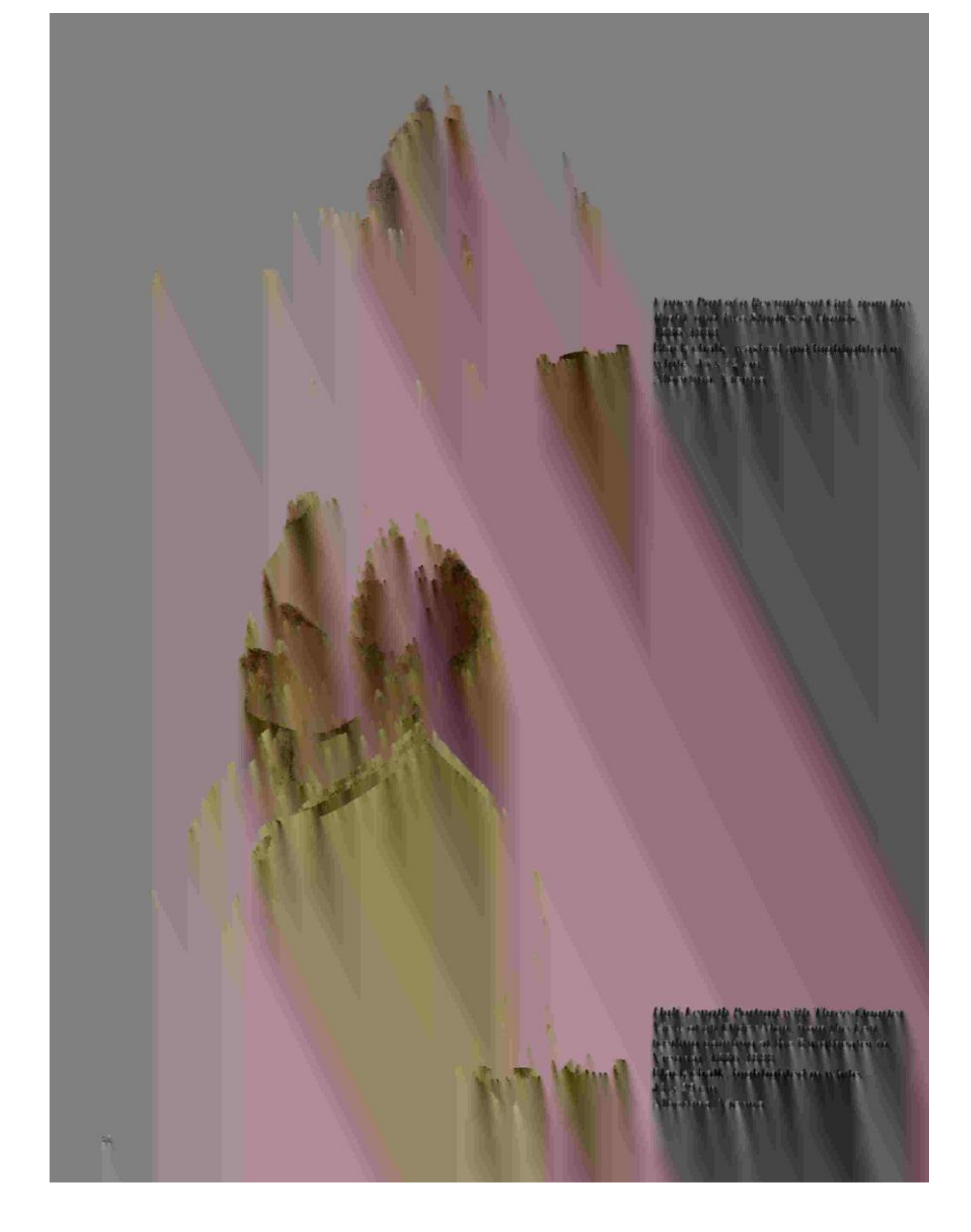


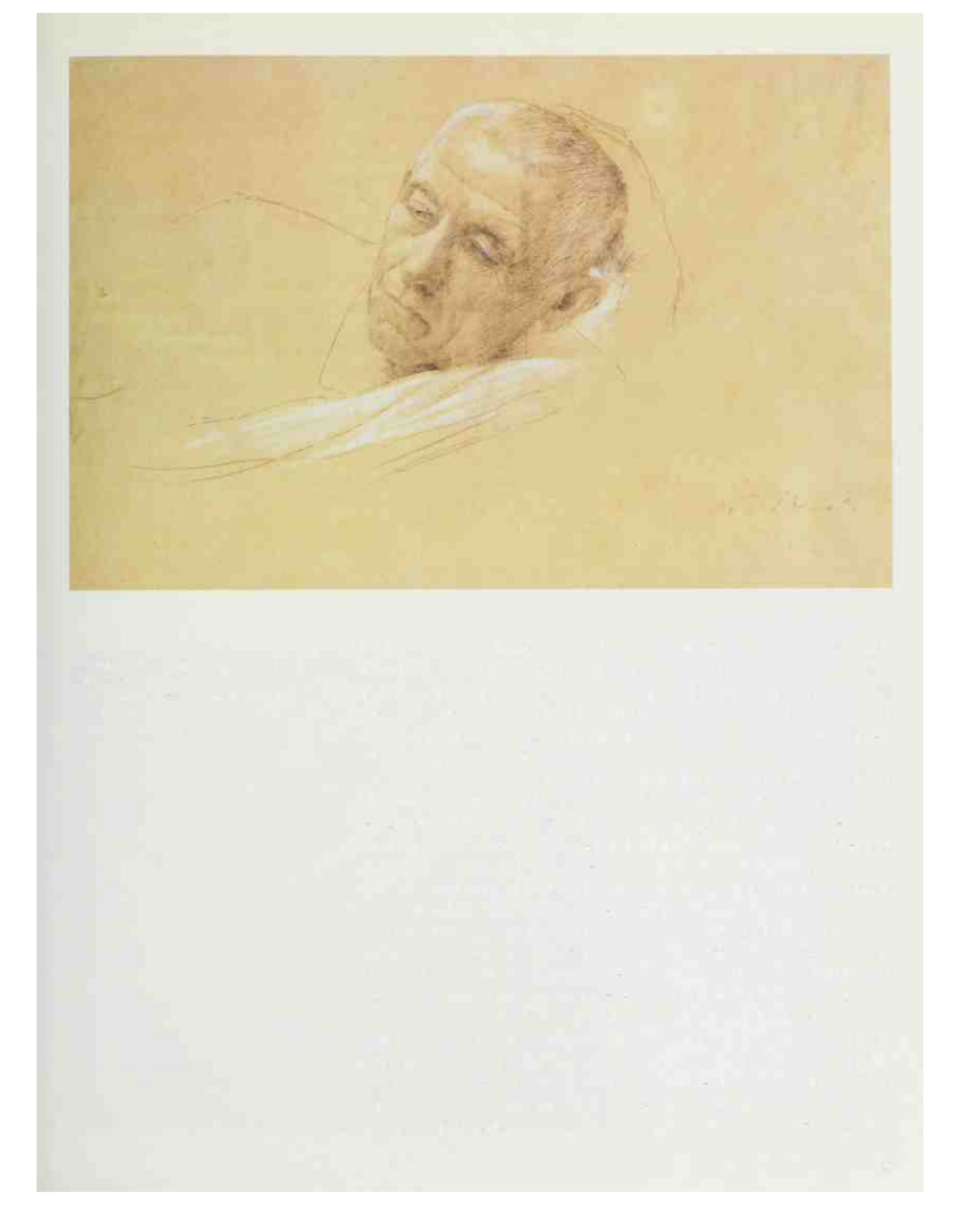
Fable, 1883
Fabel
Oil on canvas, 85 x 117 cm
Historisches Museum, Vienna

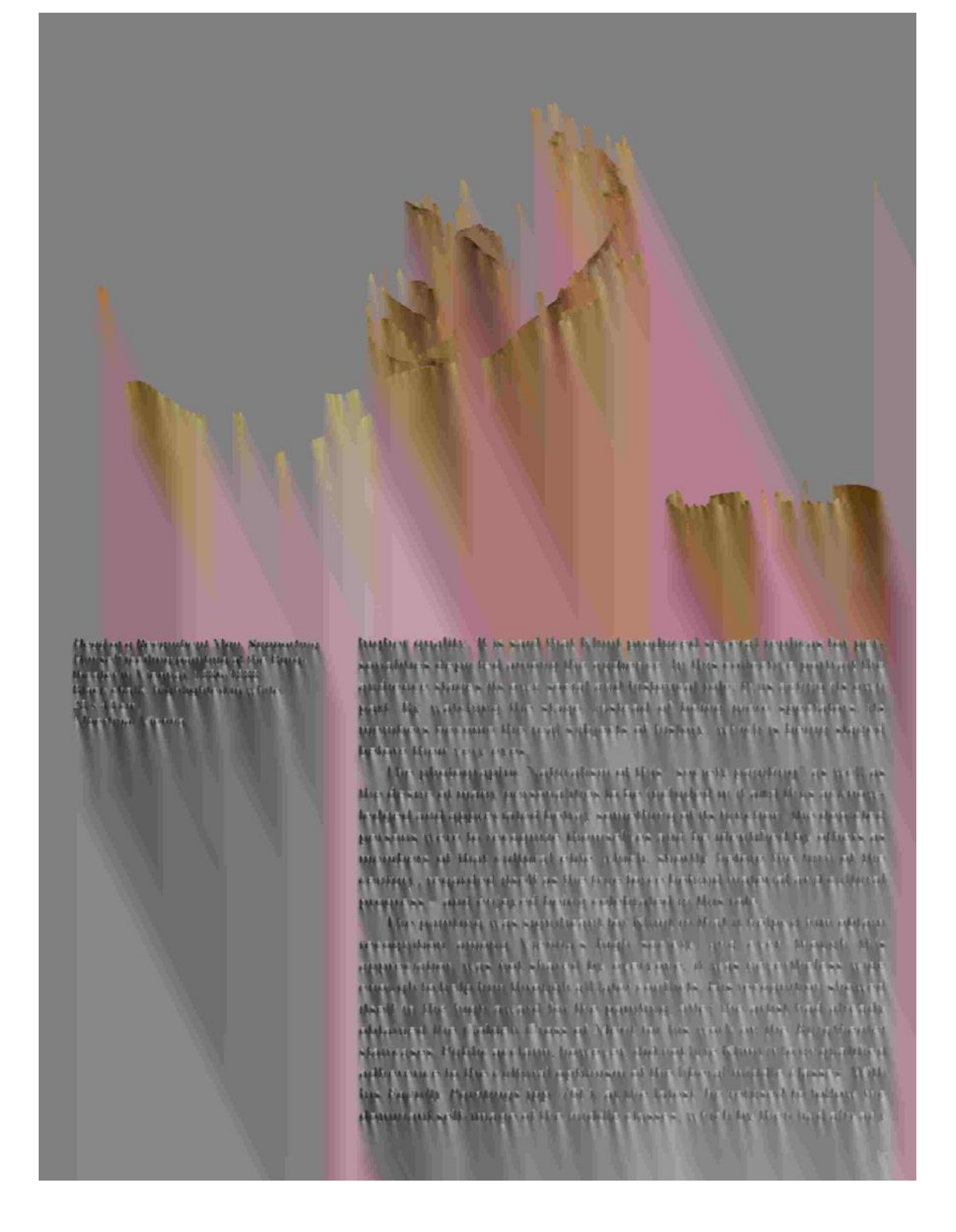


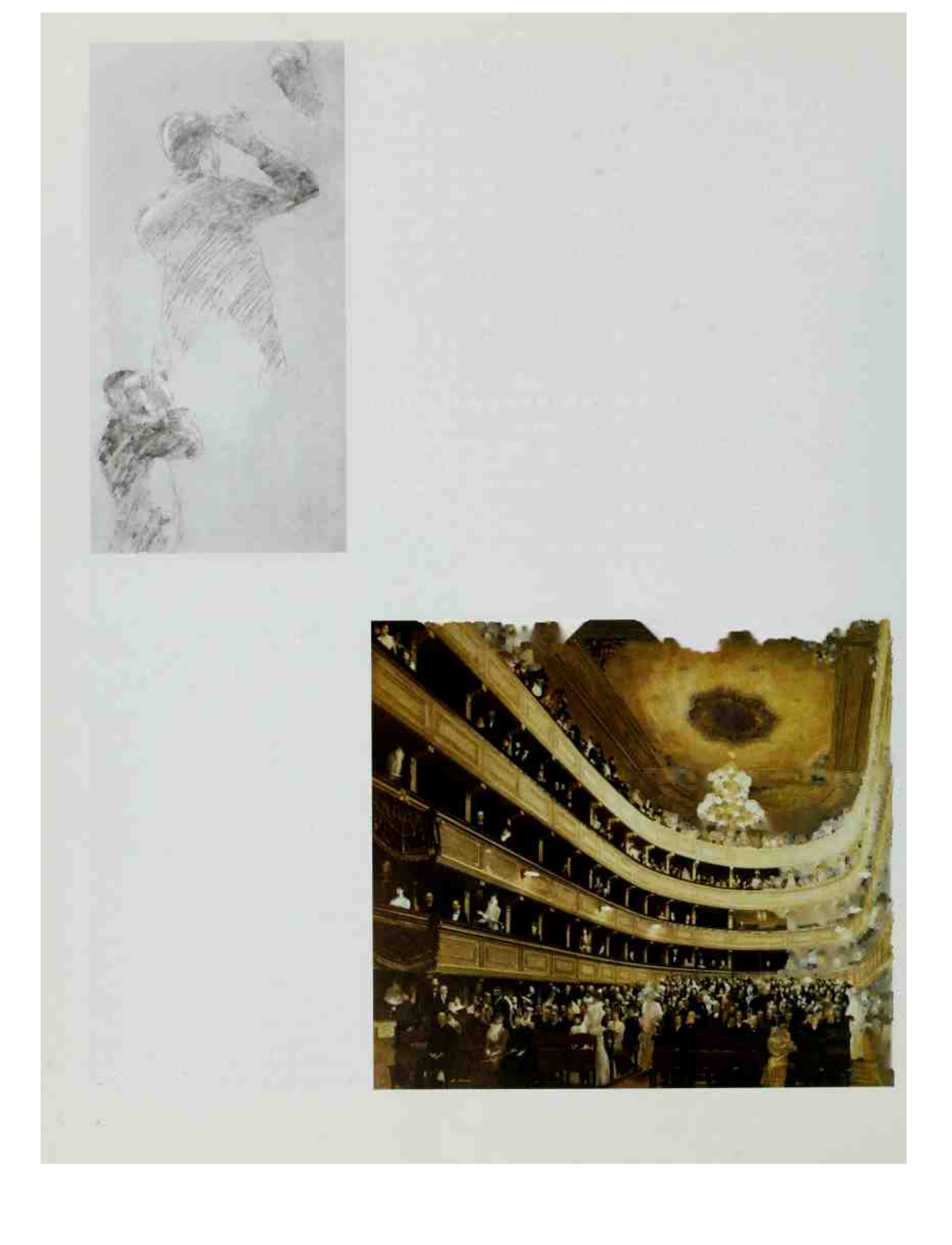








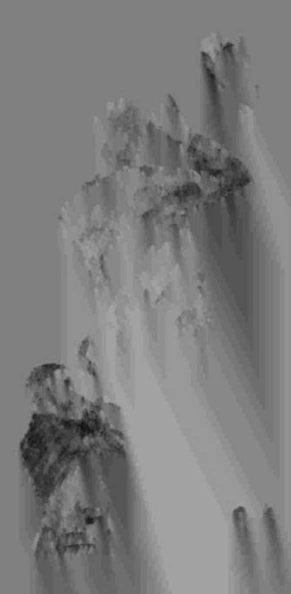




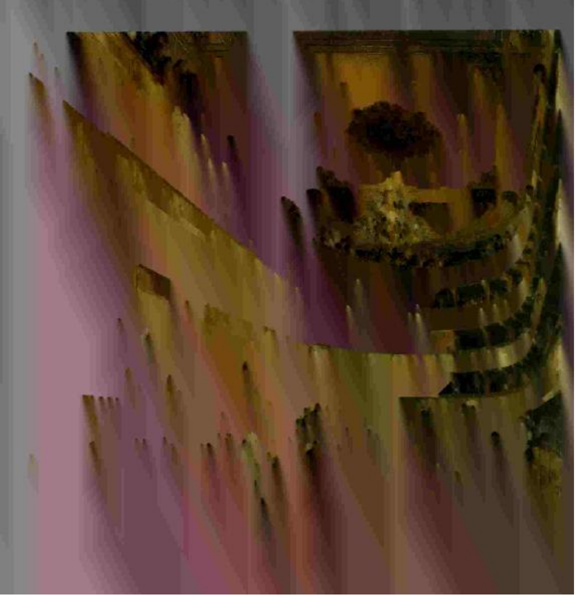
became rather shaky. With this refusal he questioned both his own identity as an artist and the ideals of artistic monumentalism during the [illegible] approval [illegible].

When a publisher commissioned Klimt to submit samples for a "sumptuous work" of allegories and emblems, Klimt came into contact with the artistic – though this time allegorical – treatment of typically historical themes. The keynote of the painting was already sounding in that allegorical "overall context" of natural and social life which Klimt was to depict later, for example in his Faculty Paintings. For his first portfolio (1882–84) Klimt drew, among other things, sketches for [illegible], Fable, [illegible], Realms of Nature and [illegible], as well as [illegible] sketches for Fable (p. [illegible]) and Idyll (p. [illegible]). For his second portfolio, which was published from 1895 onwards, he created, among other things, the preliminary drawings for Sculpture (pp. [illegible] and [illegible]) and Tragedy (p. [illegible]) as well as the painting Love (p. [illegible]).

The painted version of Love (1895) already shows us the mature [illegible] of Klimt's art. It was a theme to which he [illegible] again and again. The two lovers are supplemented by secondary figures which [illegible] allegory [illegible] the [illegible] of this genre painting [illegible] of [illegible] "[illegible]" [illegible] depicted in the form of female figures, which were to become characteristic of his major works later, point to a variety of threats to human life and happiness as well as their transience. His

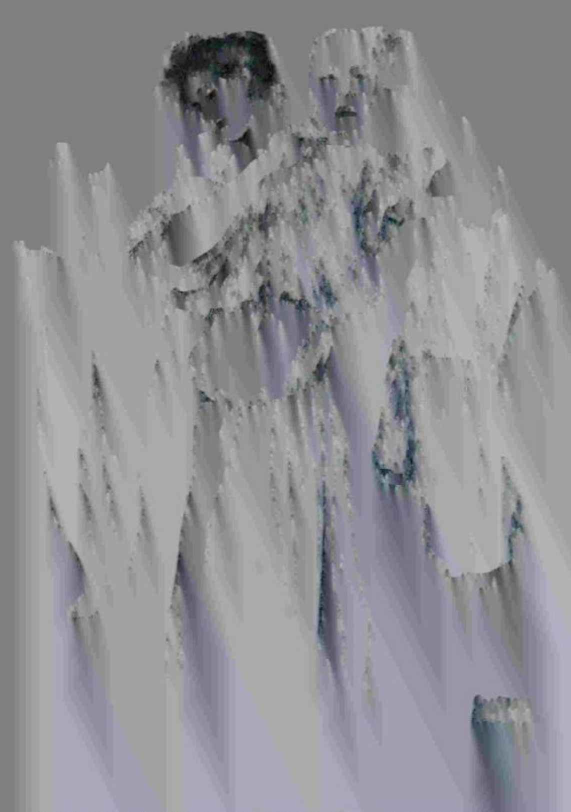


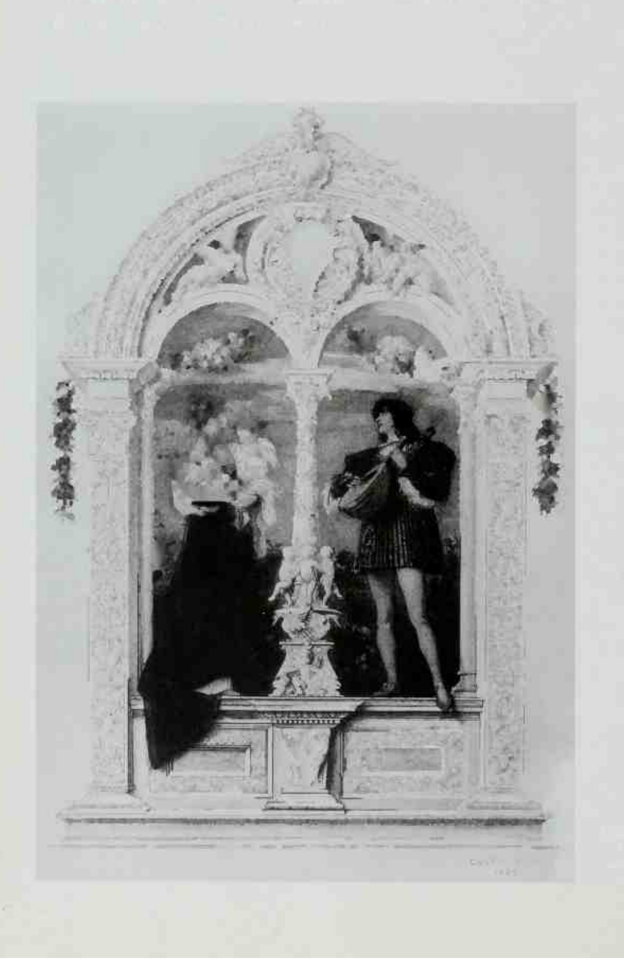
Head and Bust of a Girl [illegible]
[illegible] Study [illegible]
[illegible] 1882–1884
Black chalk, heightened in white,
[illegible]
Albertina, Vienna



Auditorium of the old Burgtheater, 1888
[illegible]
Historisches Museum, Vienna





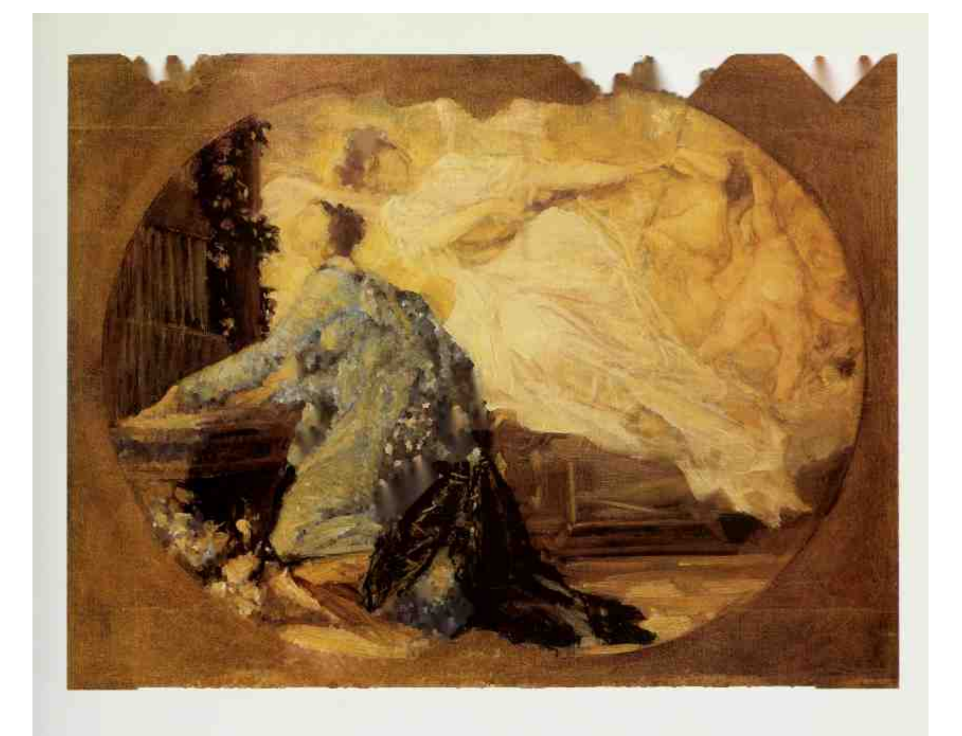


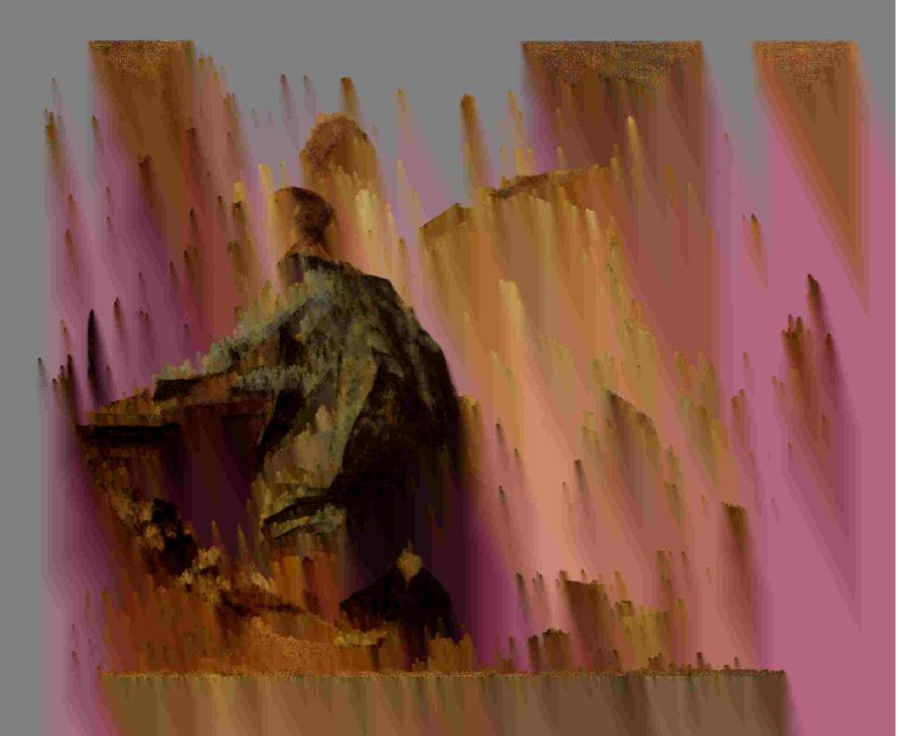
[illegible] stages in the development of art – are in fact lined up like [illegible] above a stone balustrade. [illegible] [illegible] on the proscenium arch [illegible] Athena with her [illegible], the [illegible] sculptural allegory is [illegible] and like a sphinx – a "feminine image" – to the observing figures that seem to have been changed back from sculptures to living beings again.

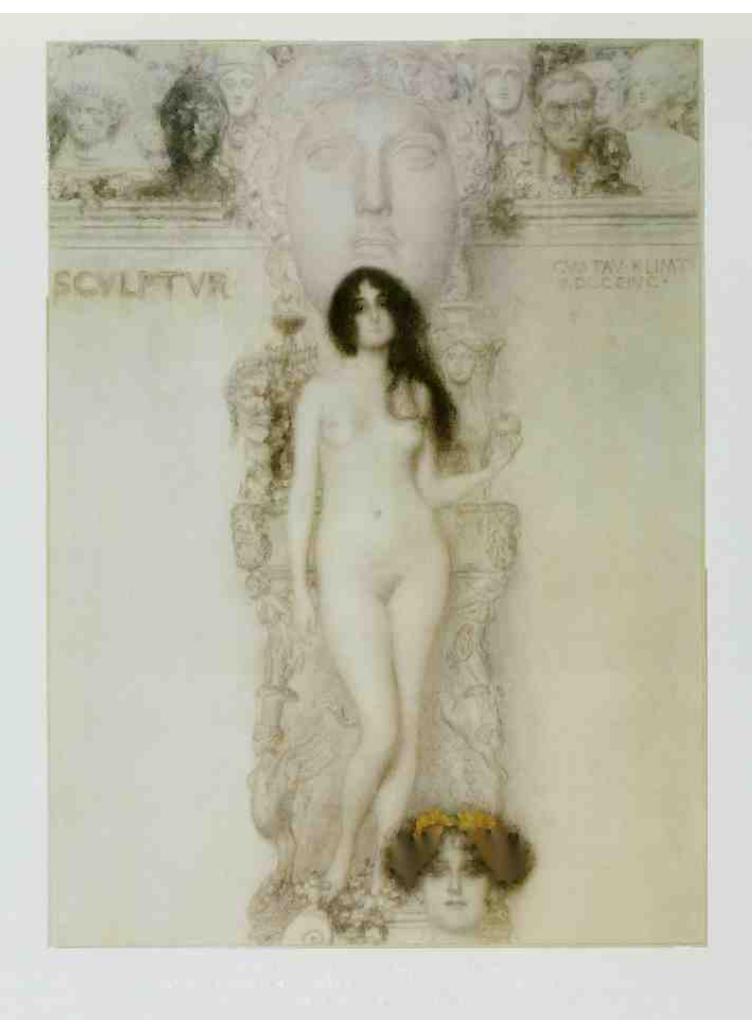
When Klimt was given the commission in 1898 [illegible], his proposal completely different thematic and formal demands from the official commissions for the large Ringstrasse buildings. The industrialist Nikolaus Dumba left the architectural work and interior design of

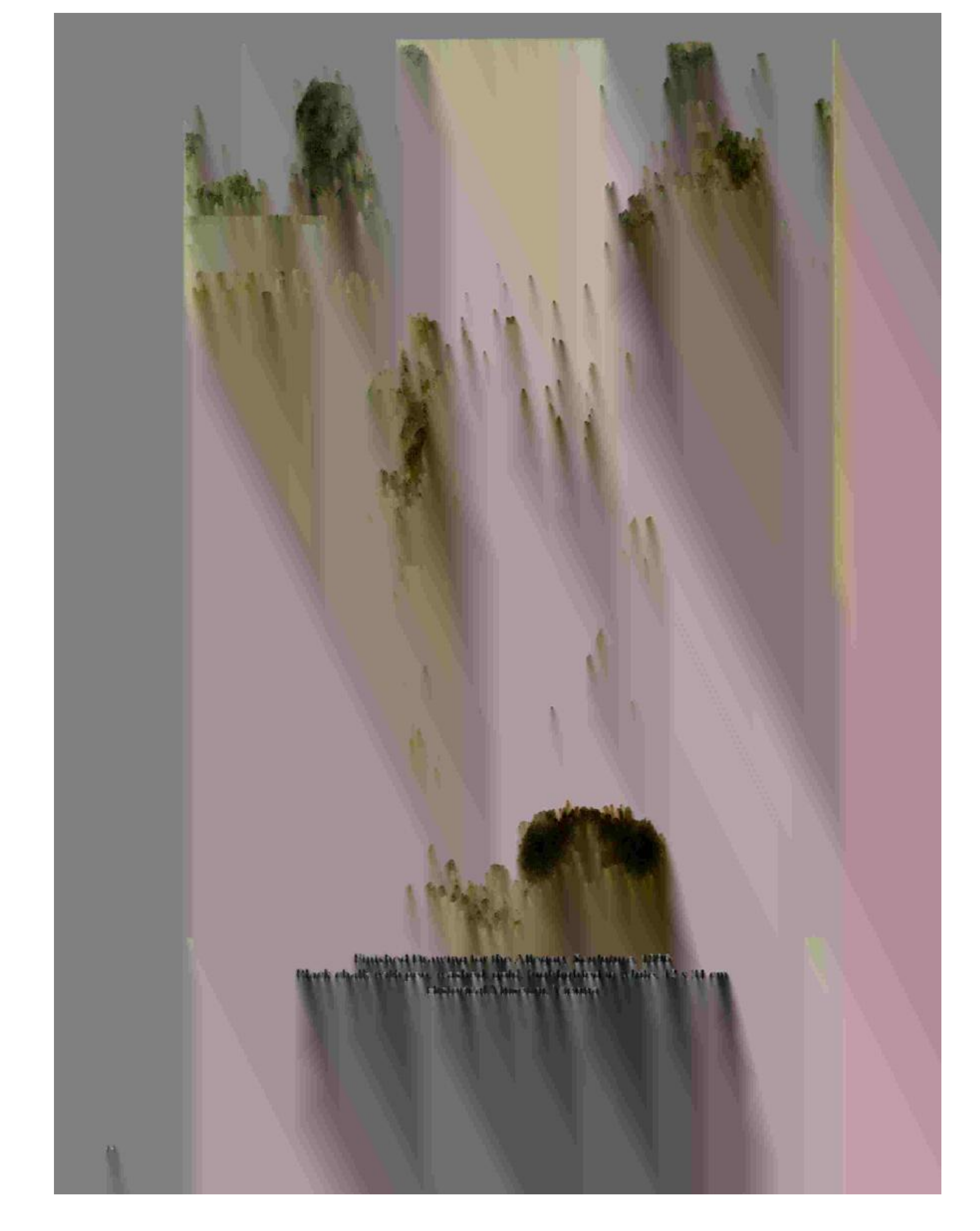


Finished Drawing for [illegible], [illegible]
[illegible] and heightened in white, [illegible]
Historisches Museum, Vienna

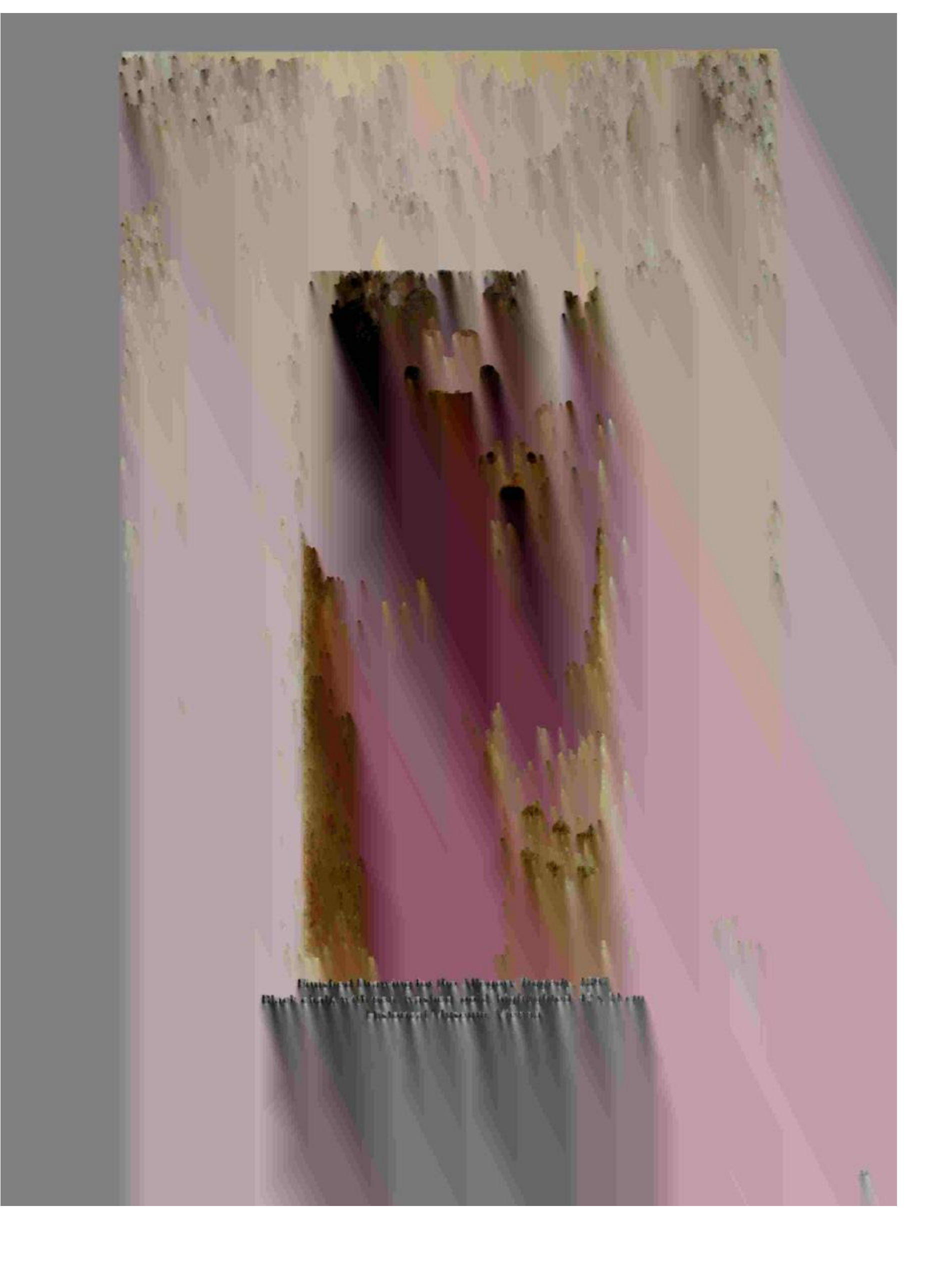


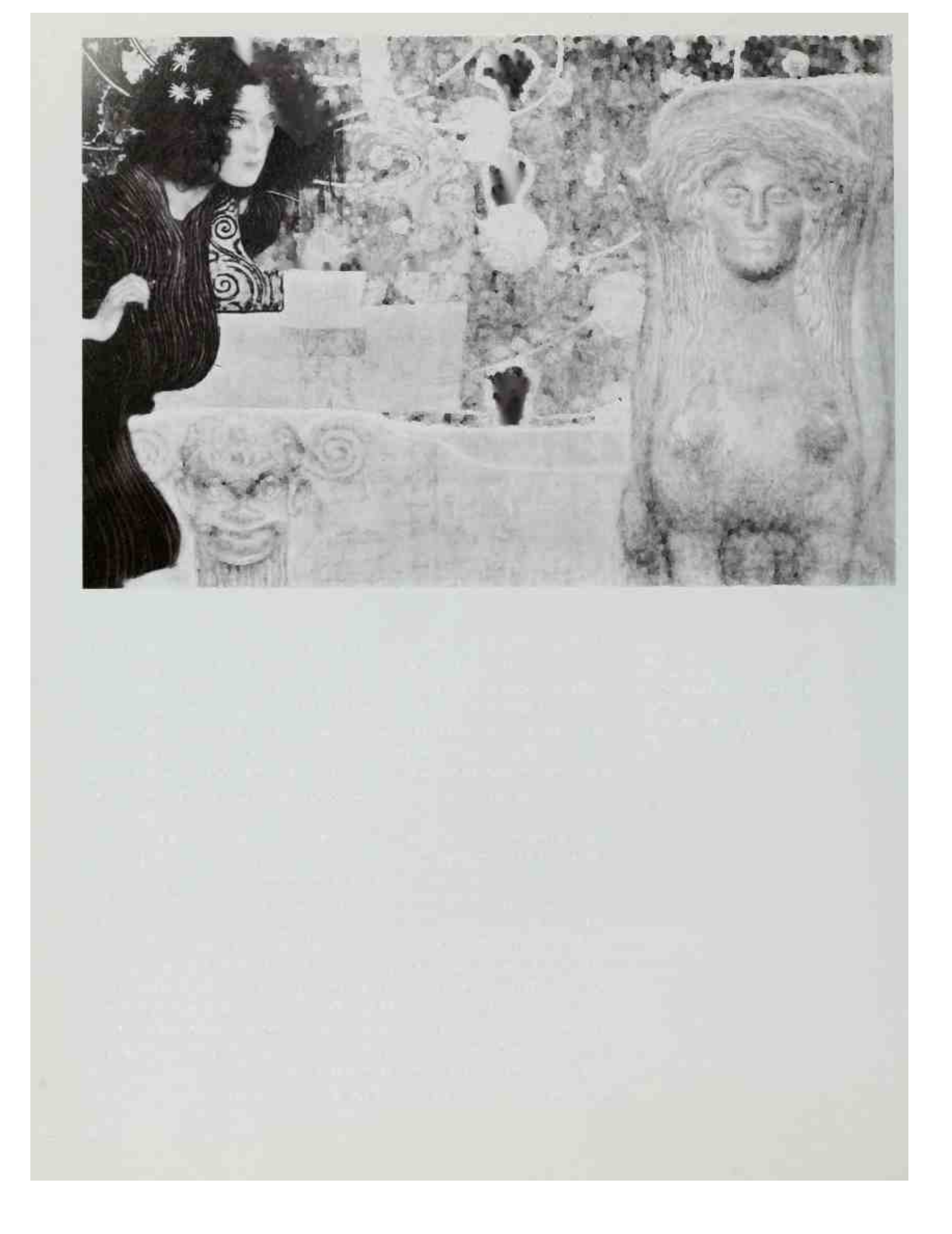


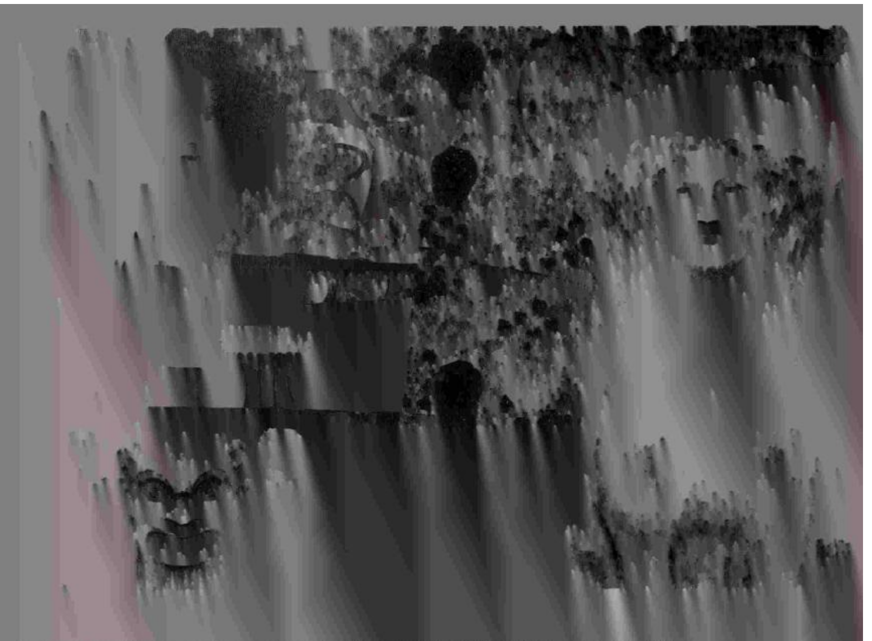

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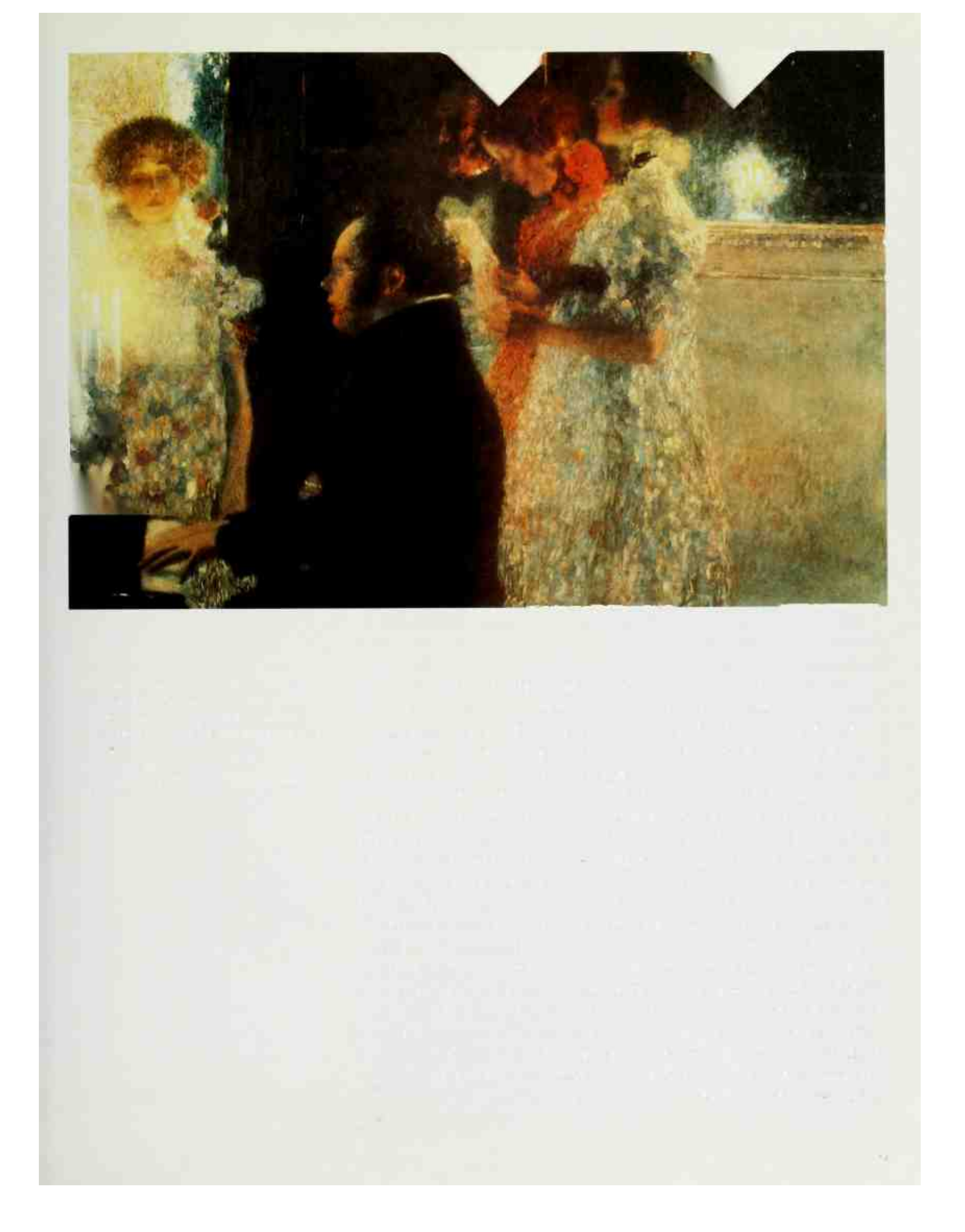


in harmony with one another, so that sometimes even the clothes of the inhabitants were subject to the uniform design of the whole.

In designing rooms full of atmosphere for Palais Dumba, the artistic [illegible]

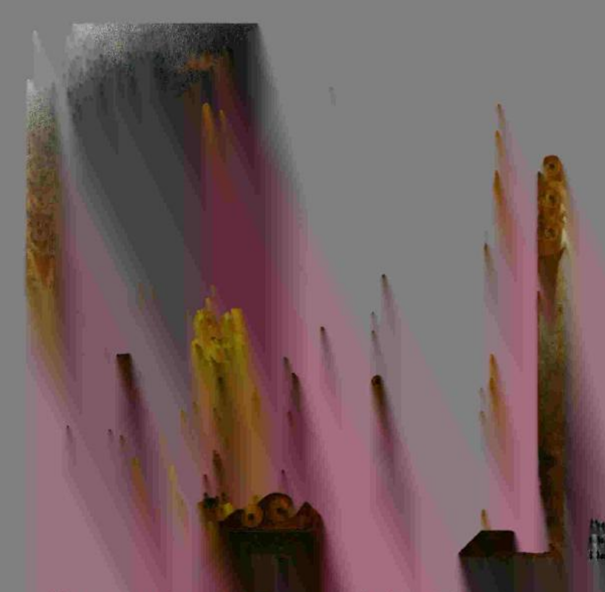
[illegible]

Music II, 1898
[illegible]
Overdoor painting in the Music Room of [illegible] Dumba's Palais [illegible]
[illegible]









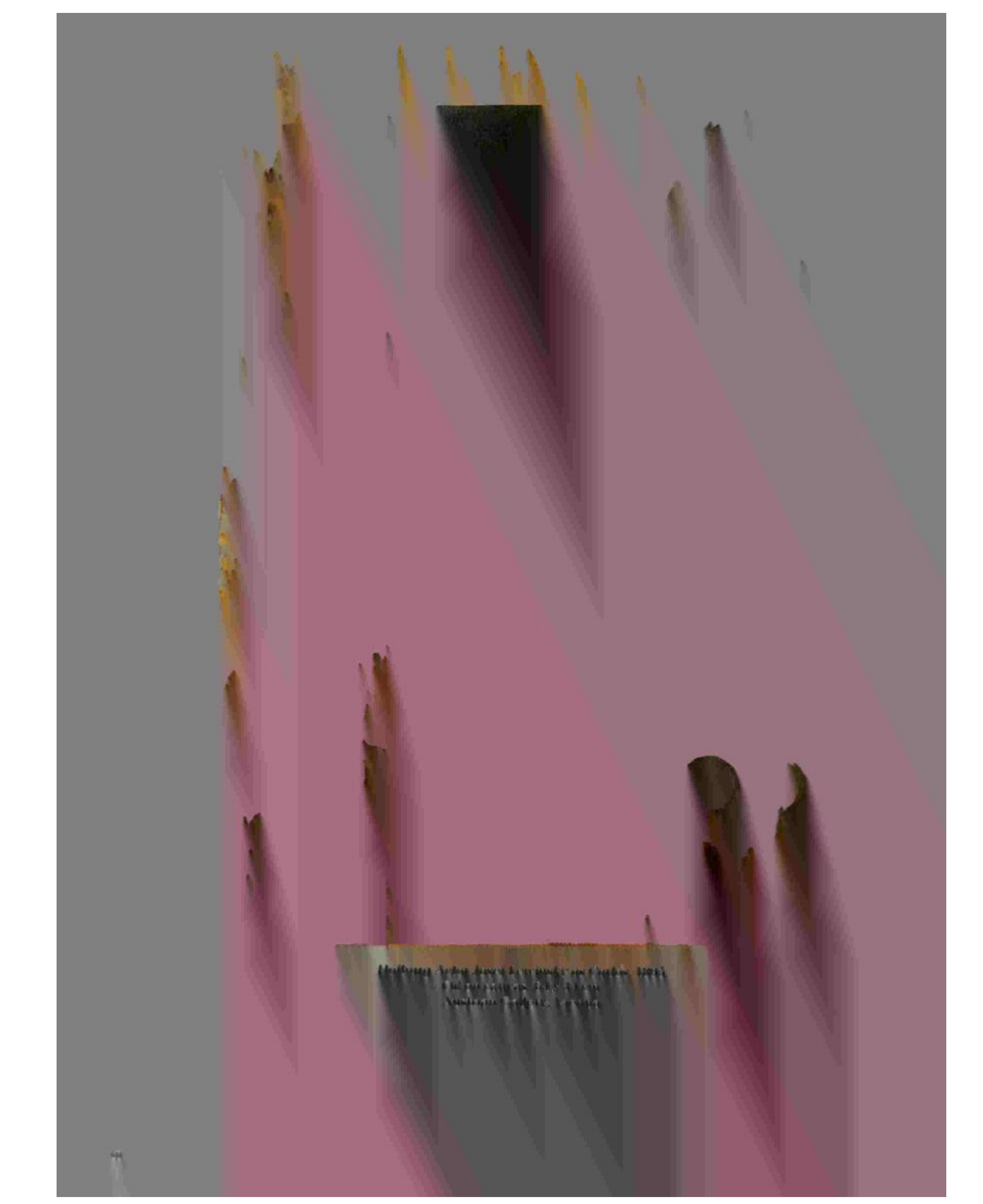
Pallas Athene, 1898
Oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm
[illegible]

The same can be said for Biedermeier. Its historical treatment is reflected in the Schubert painting. Again, it was regarded not as a finished period which might have been exemplary, but as a different version of Modernism, a time comparable to the years around 1900 in displaying a modernness that was more than temporary. The two periods were therefore seen as closely related. Both paintings, Schubert and Music II, are attempts to fuse the past with present. In the one painting it is implicitly, in the other the Biedermeier period which appears in the shape of a "different present."

19th century Historicism was based on a concept of time that saw history as an irreversible process linearly developing towards the future. Each "epoch" within this time continuum, each political or artistic period, occupied an unalterable "position". It would never return, nor could it be recalled in any way. In referring to the past, for example when Vienna's liberal culture of the 1860s and 70s referred back to the Italian Renaissance, the relevant artistic period was seen as an era in that historical period. Its artistic achievements, styles and models could be kept alive for the present through the effort and development of institutions such as museums and educational establishments (e.g. the School of Applied Art), but only as a species of cultural property. Still within the framework of this linear understanding of history, Klimt's works are a [illegible] departure from the dynamic [illegible]. Klimt established a different concept of time and a different relationship between past and present.

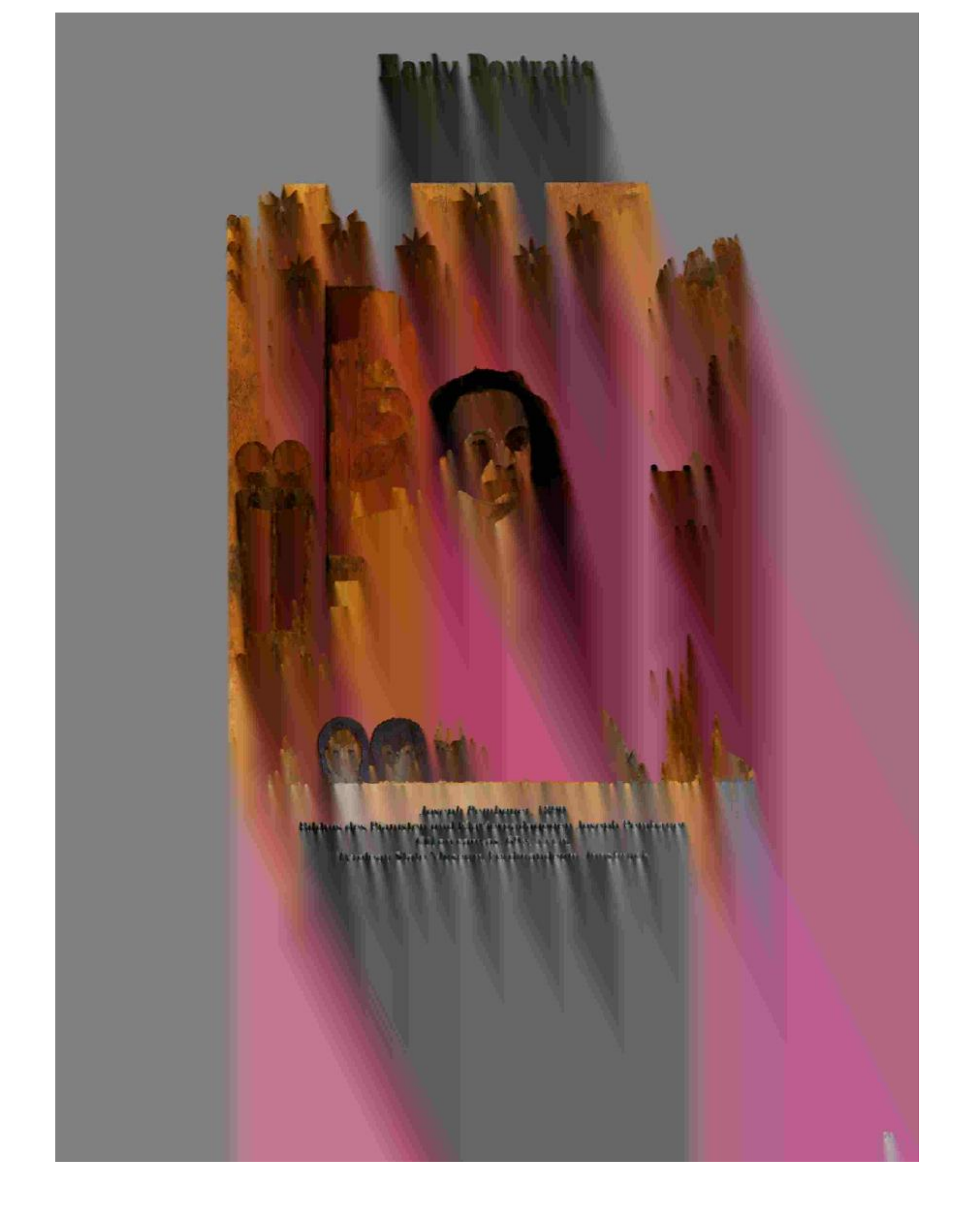




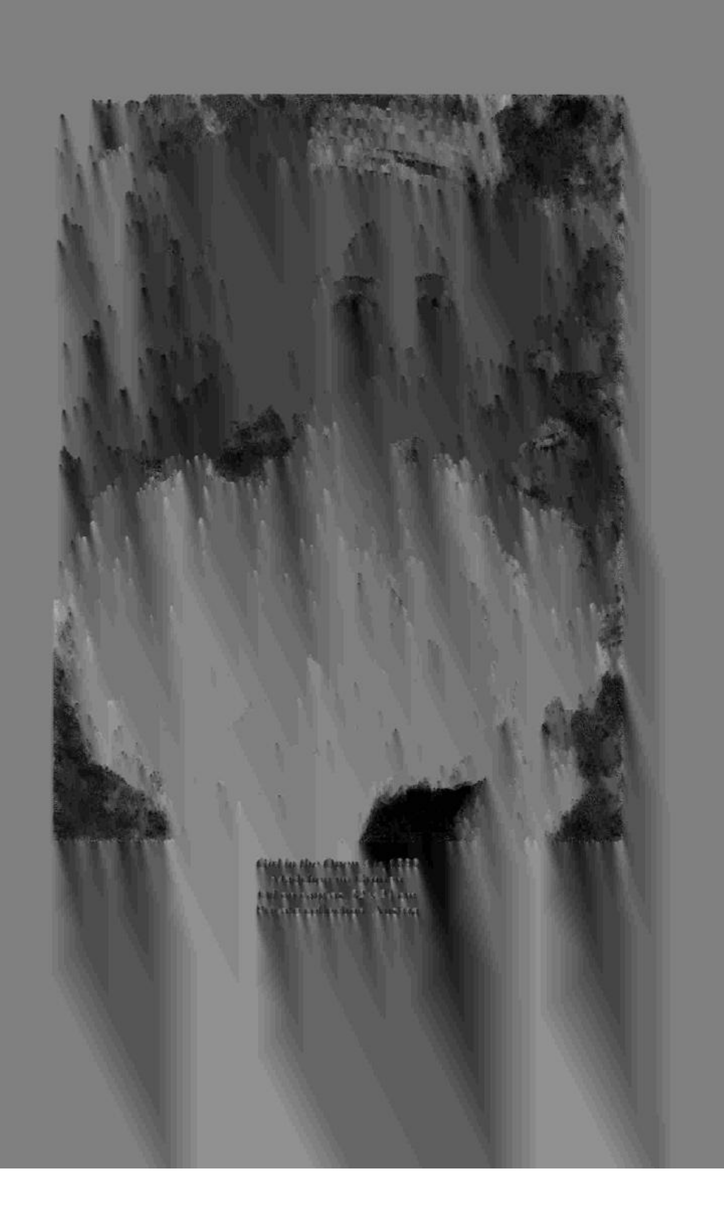



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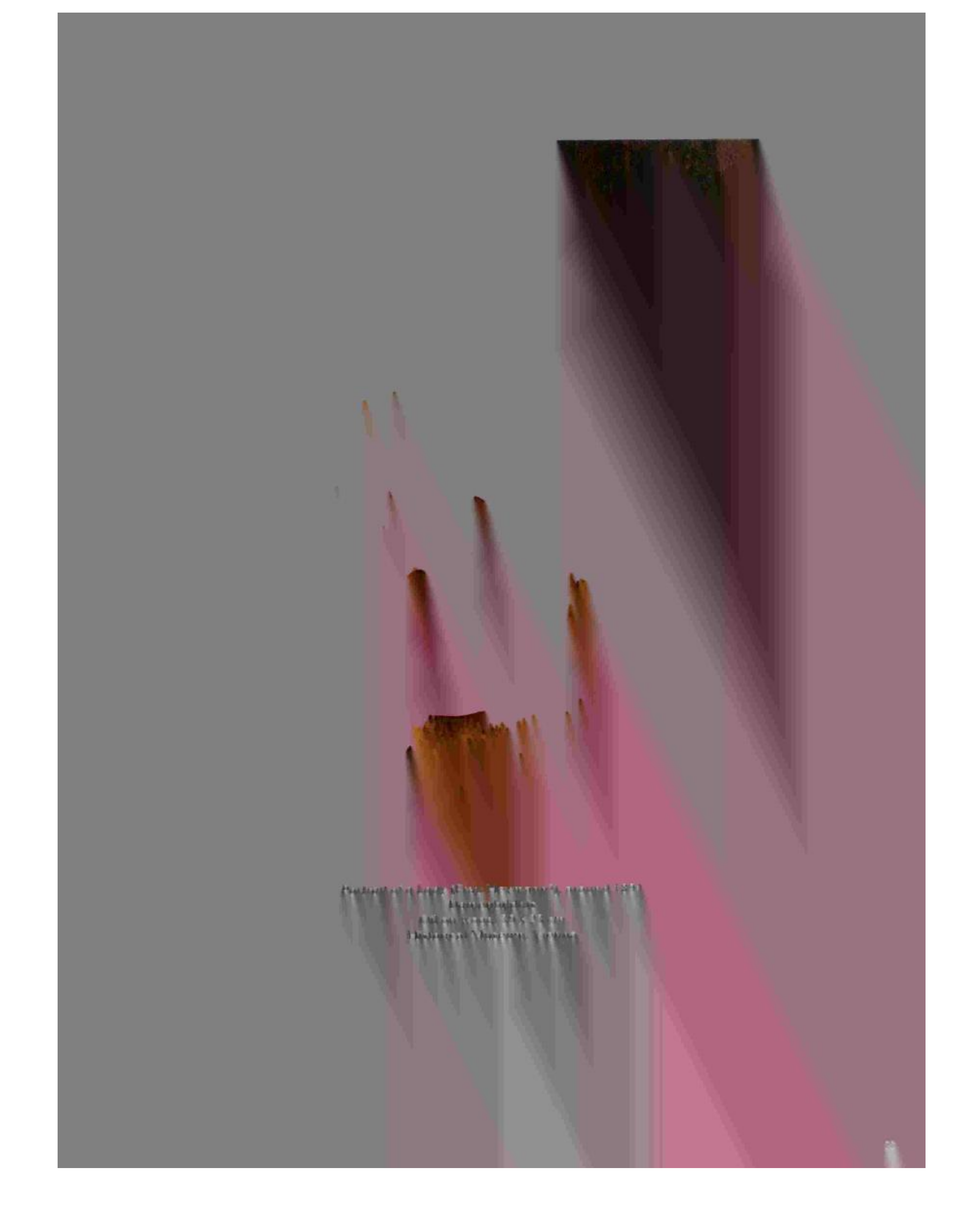
Early Portraits



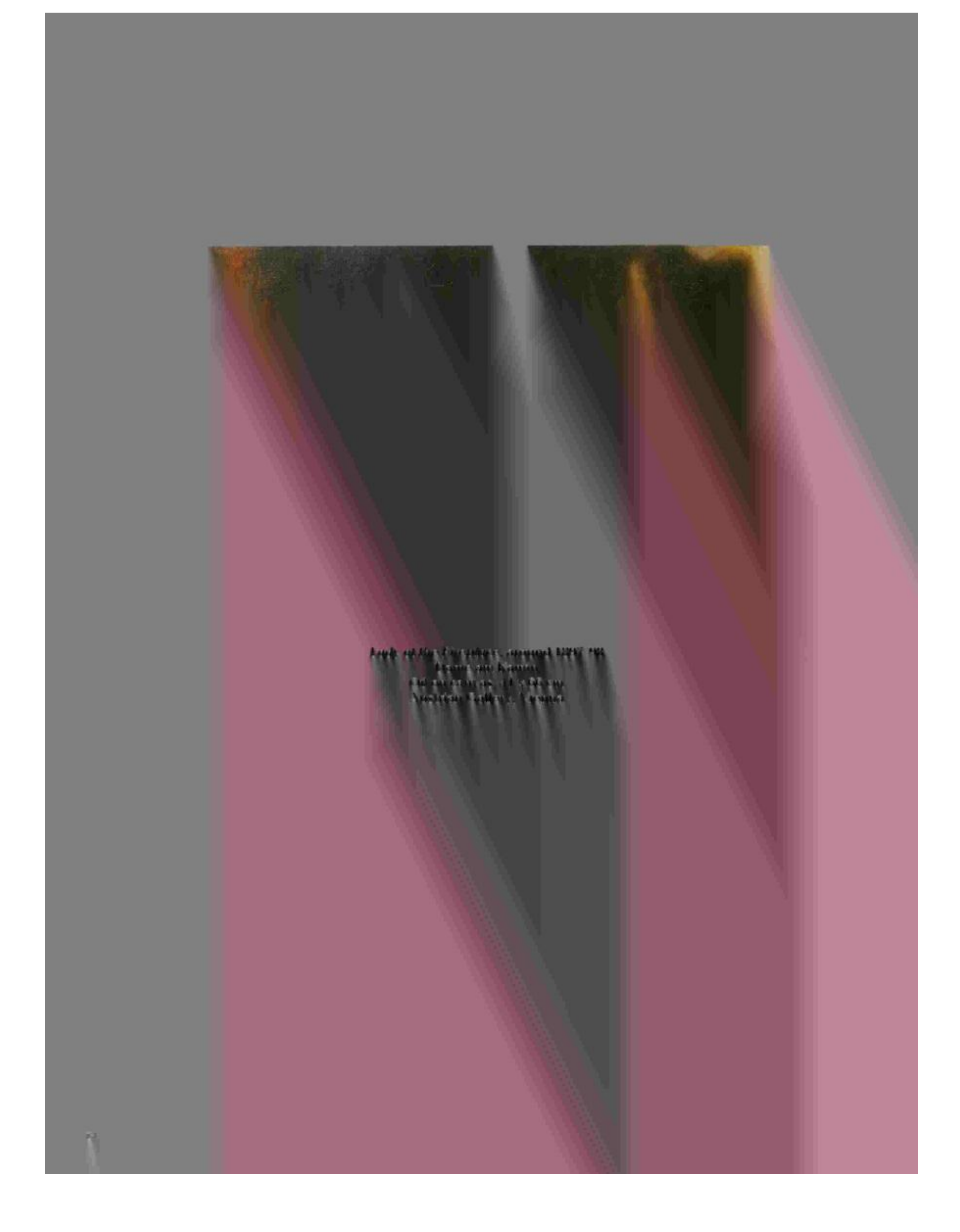




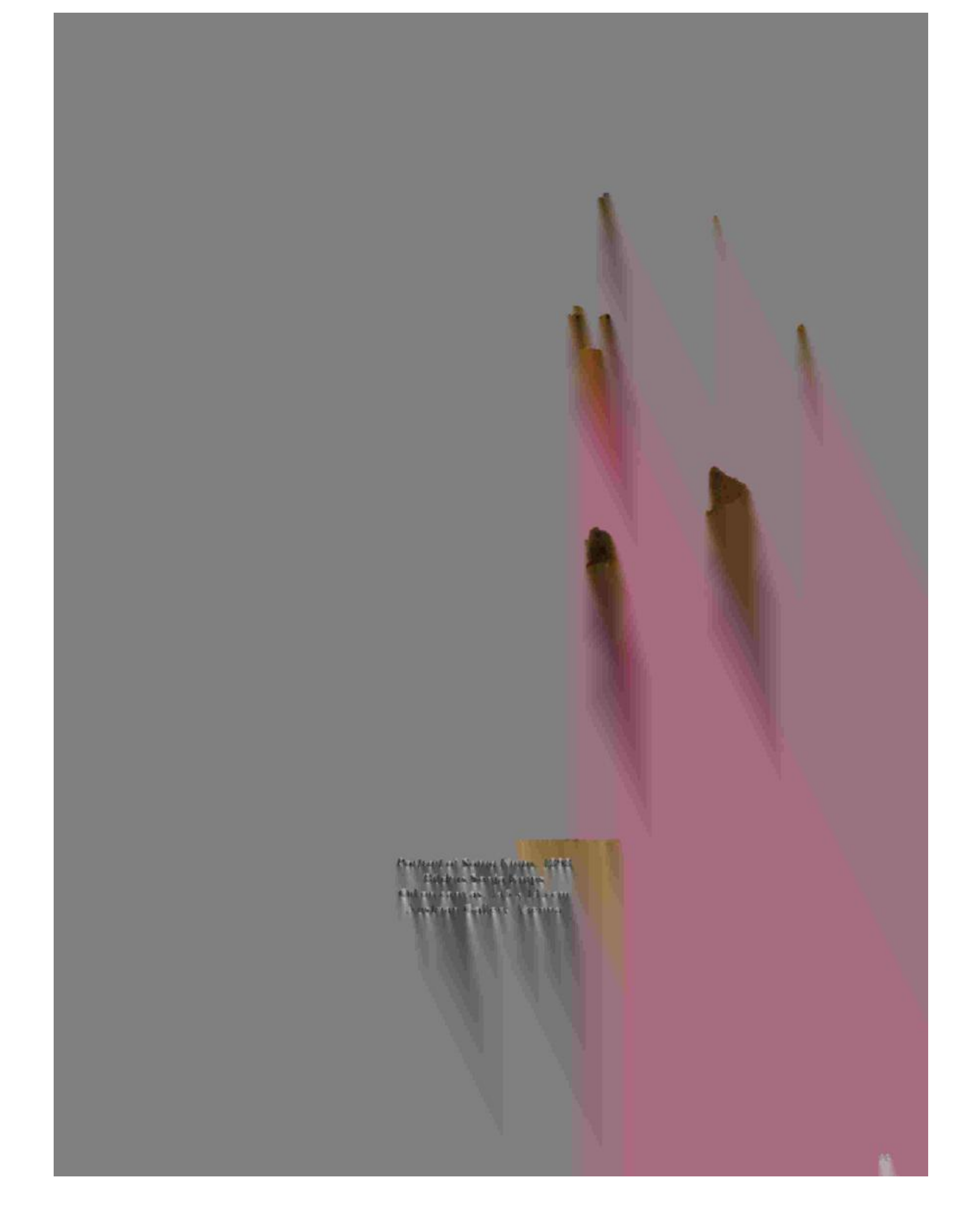


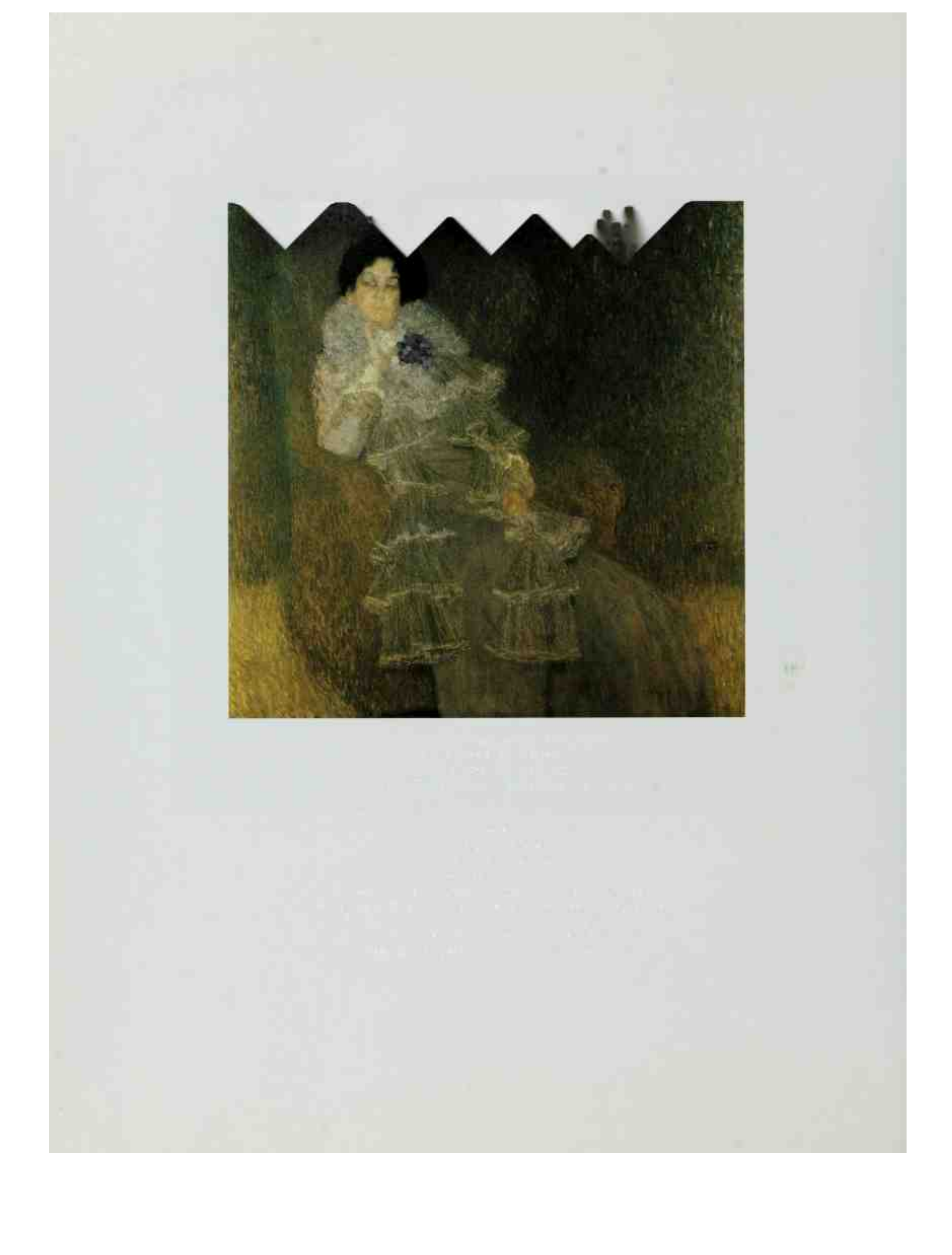


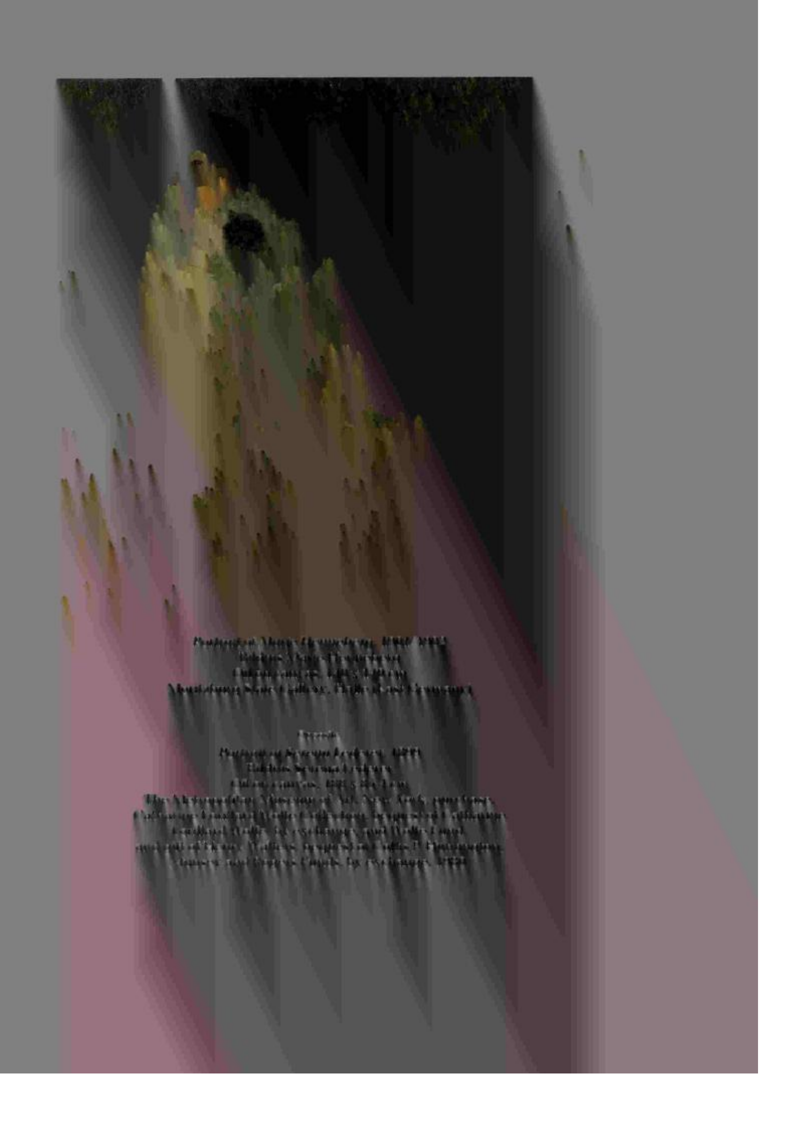




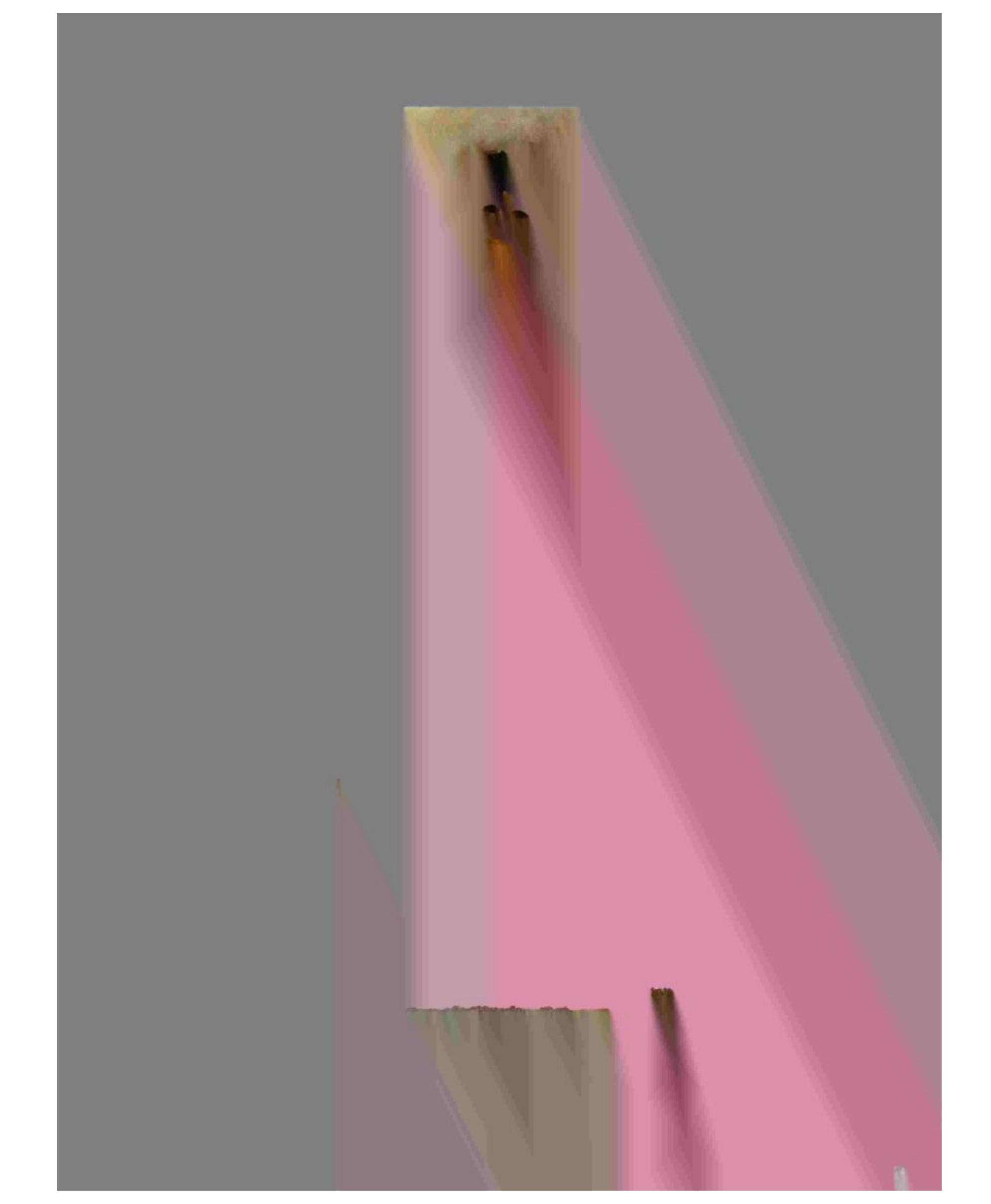




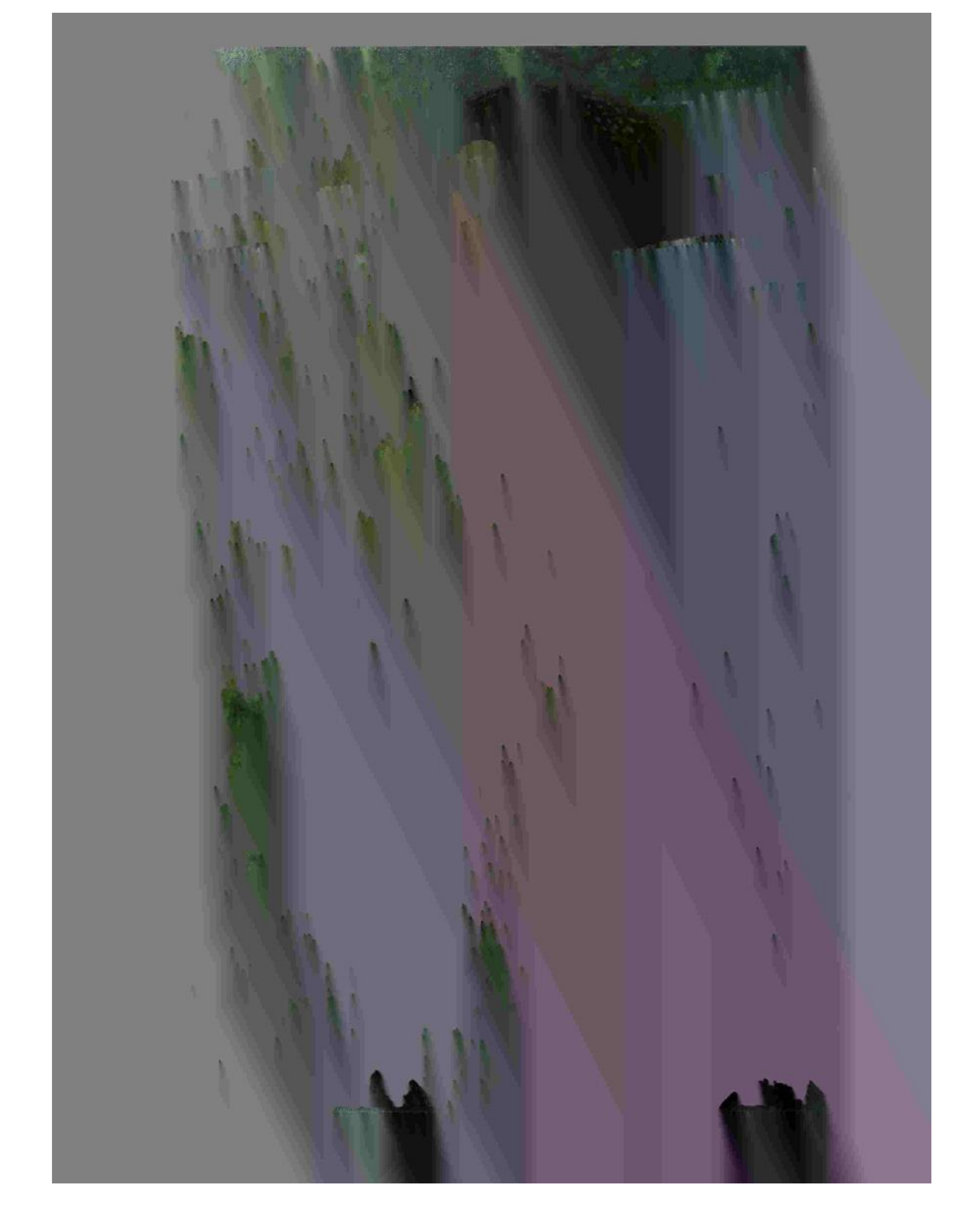














"Oedipal Revolt" – the Secession

Klimt's early works and his integration into society as an artist coincided with a crisis in liberalism and the liberal bourgeoisie. The social historian Carl Schorske has therefore interpreted Klimt's life and oeuvre entirely in terms of a "crisis of the liberal ego" – a crisis triggered by radical economic and political changes affecting the artist and his work.

Vienna's art and culture around the year 1900 mainly owed its richness to the liberal Austrian bourgeoisie, a social class whose rise was closely connected with the difficult and contradictory development of its political emancipation. Earlier, in 1848, the middle classes had failed to enforce their political demands, and their bourgeois "revolution" had been crushed by the military counter-revolution of the reigning absolute monarchy. They then had to enter into cautious, [illegible] compromise with other social classes in order to have any political power at all. Sharing their power with the aristocracy and the ruling dynasty had an adverse effect on the economic progress and especially the industrialization of the Habsburg monarchy, so that Austria remained an agricultural country well into the nineteenth century.

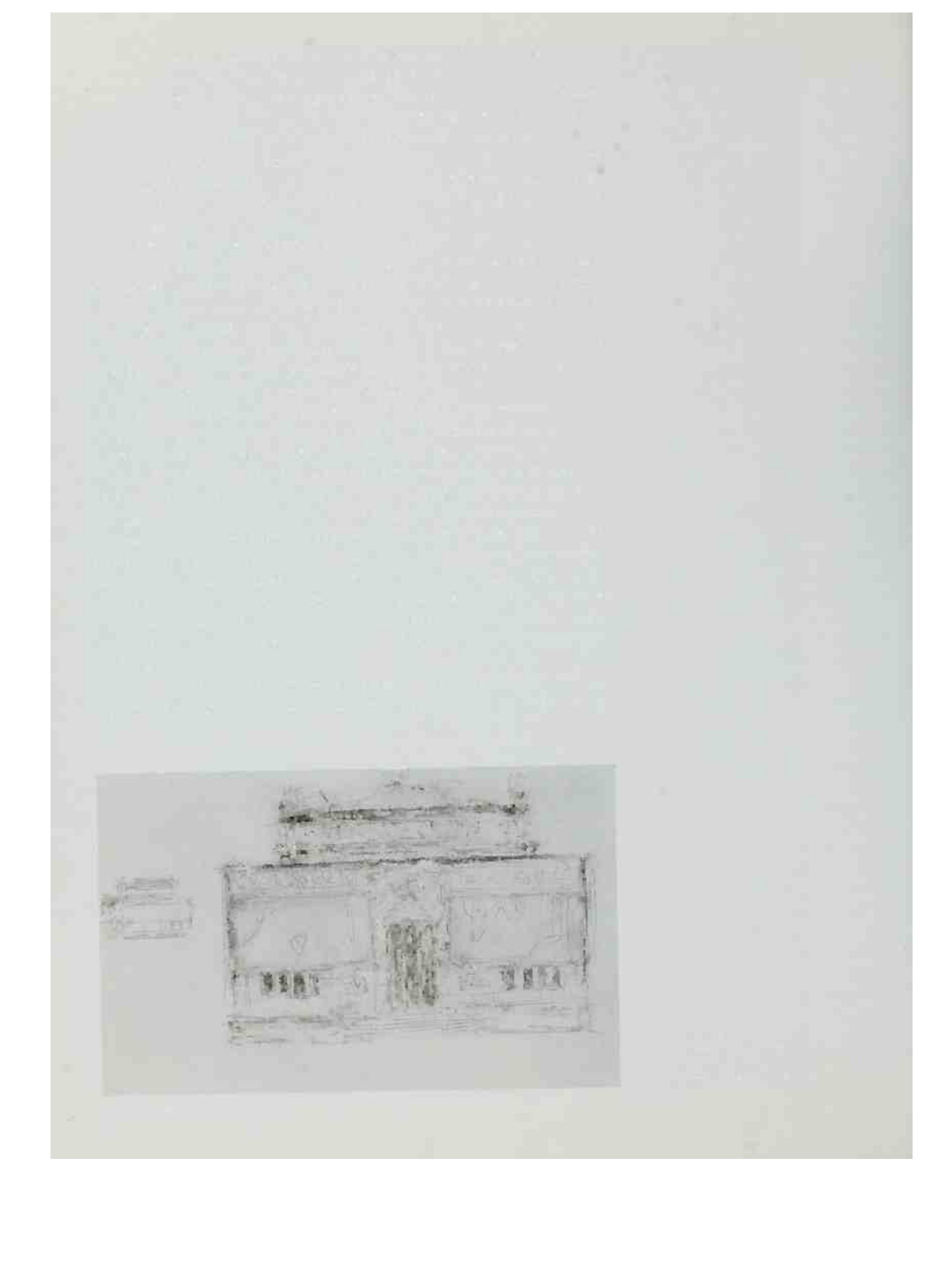
Towards the end of the century, the middle classes found themselves falling between two stools. Not only did they have to maintain their identity towards the aristocracy and the Kaiser's dynastic politics, they now had to do the same in the face of modern social movements and the large-scale political parties which lent substance to such movements. Also, the structure of the state, which continued to be mainly agricultural, did not allow the middle classes to gain a real economic foothold as a capitalist force. Thus the "social question" developed into an existential crisis of the empire that was economic, philosophical and political. The problem was further aggravated by ethnic conflicts between the various nations of the Habsburg Empire, which was only kept together by force.

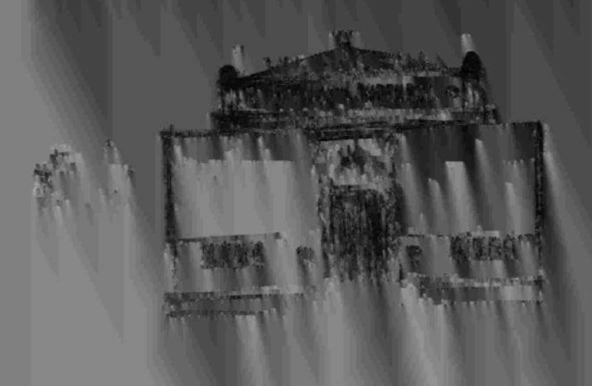
The failure of industrialization – and, with it, economic modernization – came to a climax in the 1873 crash, in the very same month that Vienna was holding its world fair. As a result, the middle classes were barred from any share in political power, and no middle-class minister was appointed. In addition, towards the end of the century, the political scope of the middle classes was curtailed even further by the large political parties – the Christian Social Democrats and the Socialists. The political and social demands of the labour movement, in particular, could no longer be suppressed.



Two Studies of a Girl and Four Studies of [illegible]
[illegible]

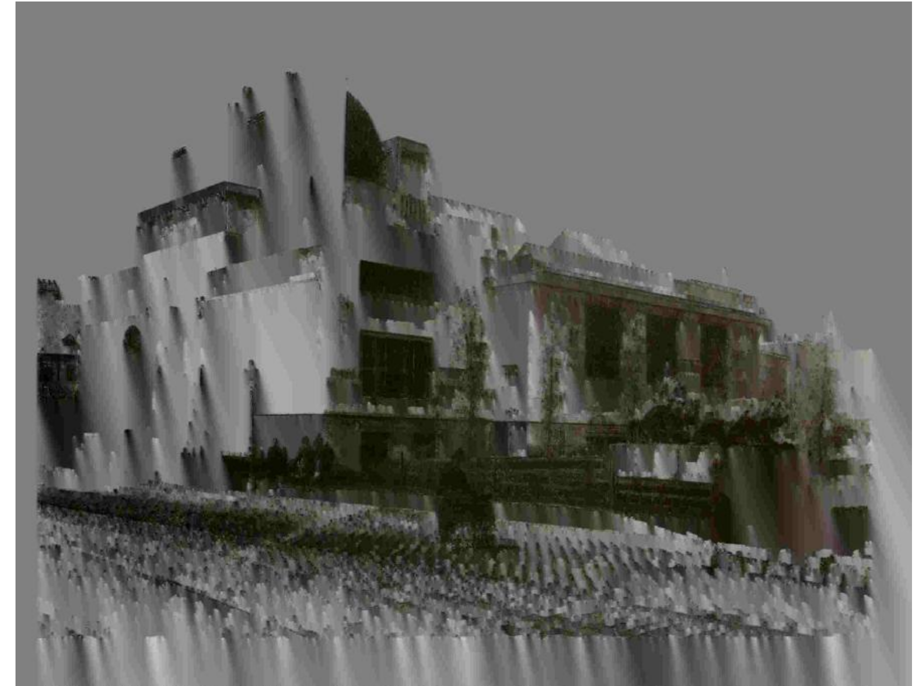
[illegible]

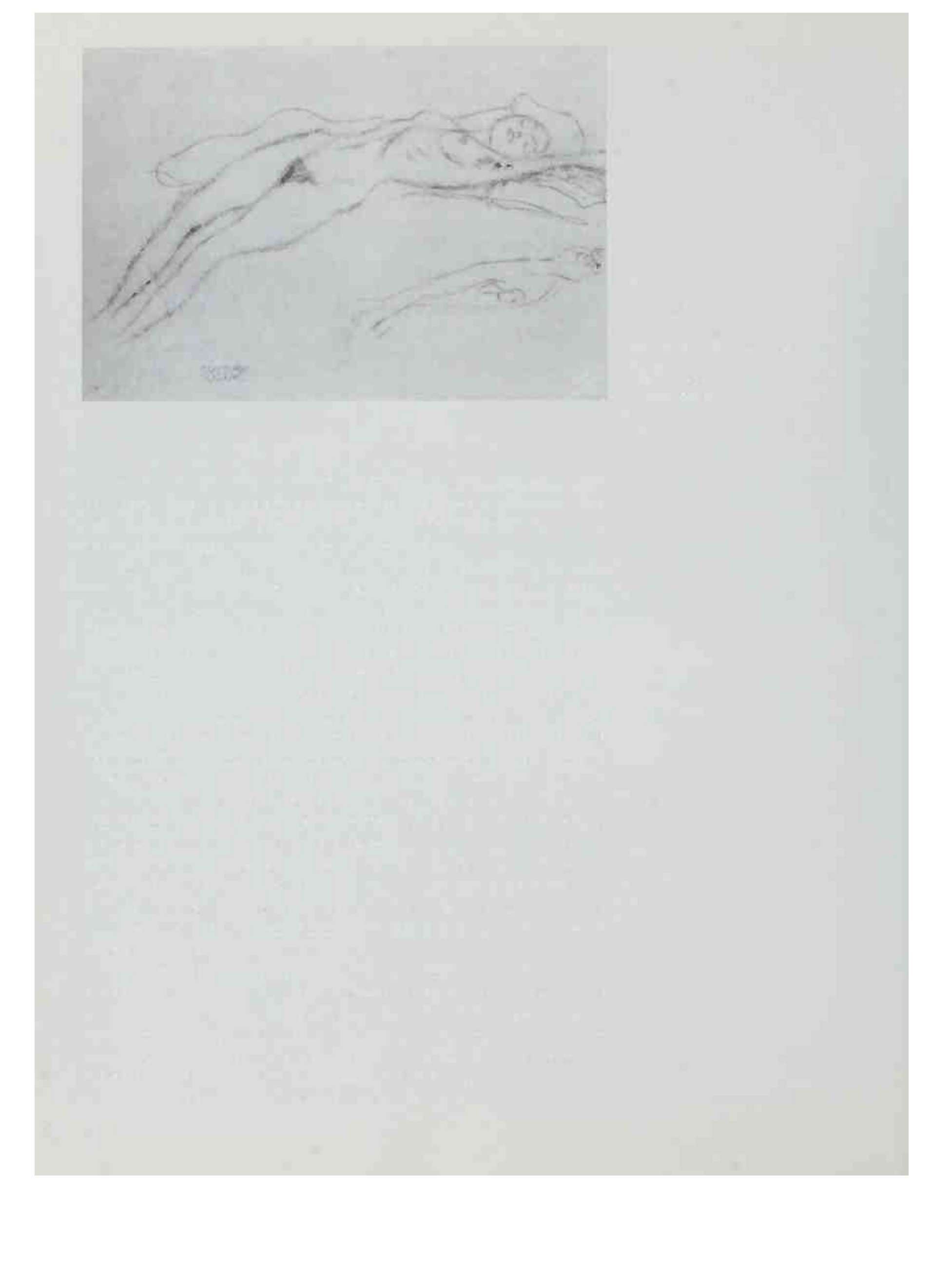


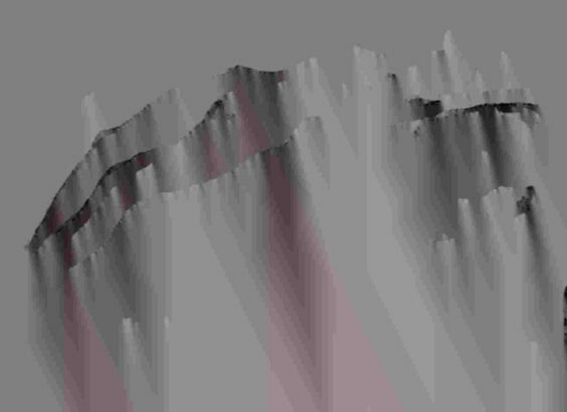










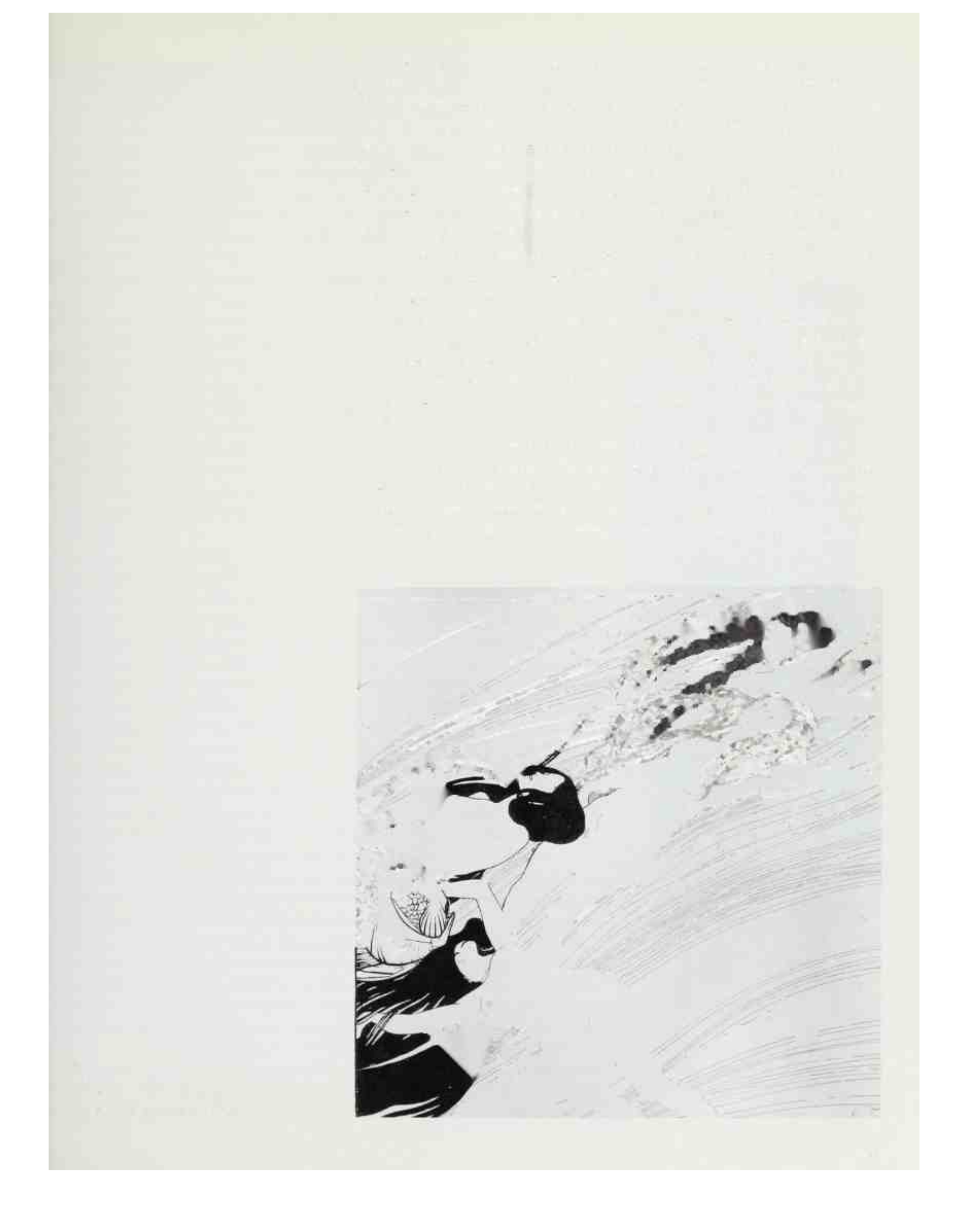


Recumbent Female Nude with Study of Arms, [illegible]
Black chalk, [illegible]
[illegible]

written document of the group and gives a coherent picture of their understanding of themselves as well as their self-confidence. The letter was immediately made public, thus confirming the final breach, although the term Secession was avoided at first.

The following is an extract from the artist's letter: "As the governing body must be aware, a group of artists has been trying for years to bring their views on art to bear within the Cooperative Society. These ideas have culminated in the realization that the artistic scene in Vienna must be brought more vigorously into line with the progressive development of art abroad, that exhibitions must have a non-commercial, purely artistic basis, that this must awaken in wider circles of society a purified, modern view of art, and finally that official circles must be encouraged to patronize art to a much greater extent. It has been the experience of this group of artists that, despite years of objective endeavours within the Cooperative Society, they have not met with the right understanding and comprehension. . . . The concentration of the younger Austrian artists will, one hopes, affect raising the level of artistic activity and interest in our city, and once it has achieved a broader, Austrian basis, within the entire realm." "Here we can already see the central motivation of the new artists' association. Rather than being a new interest group of a commercial kind, its members wanted to pursue an artistic mission that would affect society and the state.

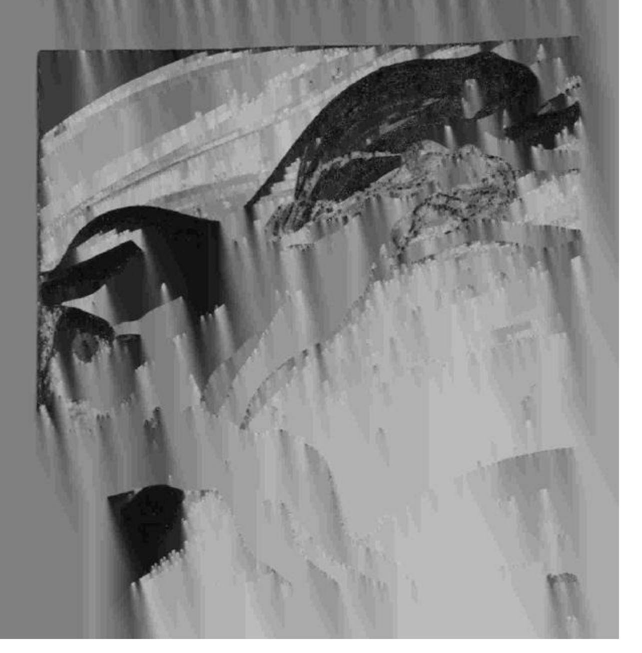
The association soon started its own magazine, Ver Sacrum (1898). It was edited by Koloman Moser, Alfred Roller and Baron Felician von Myrbach, the head of the School of Applied Art which was attached to the Royal and Imperial Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. (He was later succeeded by Josef Hoffmann.) Not only did this magazine act as an organ to publicize Secession art, it also provided a mouthpiece for their artistic and political demands.



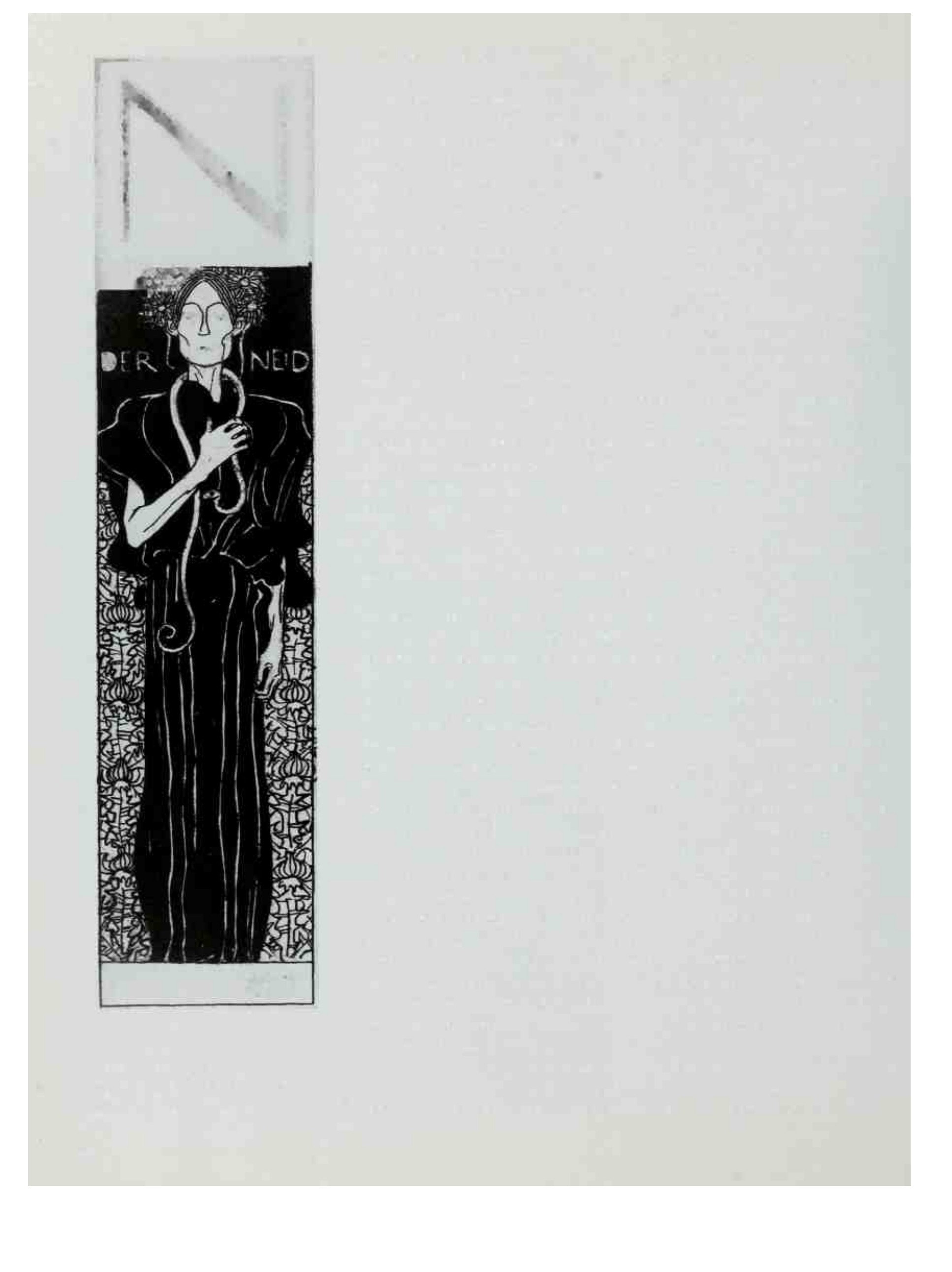
The statutes of the Association of Austrian Artists, which were subsequently published in the first edition of Ver Sacrum, summarized these objectives succinctly: "1. The Association of Austrian Artists has made it their task to promote purely artistic interests, especially the raising of the level of artistic sensitivity in Austria. ... 2. They aim to achieve this by uniting Austrian artists both in Austria and abroad, by seeking livelier contacts with leading foreign artists, including a non-commercial exhibition system in Austria, promoting Austrian art at exhibitions abroad, and by making use of the most significant artistic achievements of foreign countries both to stimulate art in our own country and to educate the Austrian public with regard to the general development of art." [illegible]

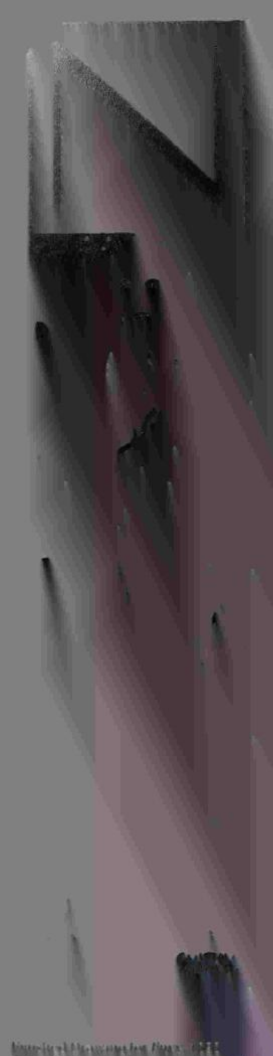
Very soon after the Secession had been founded, the artists began to make preparations for their own exhibition building. The architect was Joseph Maria Olbrich and the project for which a rough sketch by Klimt still exists [illegible] took only around six months to complete. In November 1898 the building opened with the Second Secession Exhibition. [illegible]

It was not until the first edition of the magazine Ver Sacrum that the term Secession was used with any claim to a cultural programme. The intentions of the artists, ... as well as their reference to the ancient Roman secession, were explained by Max Burckhardt in the introductory article: "Whenever the tensions caused by economic antagonism



Fish Blood, 1898
Fischblut
[illegible]
[illegible]


DER NEID



[illegible]

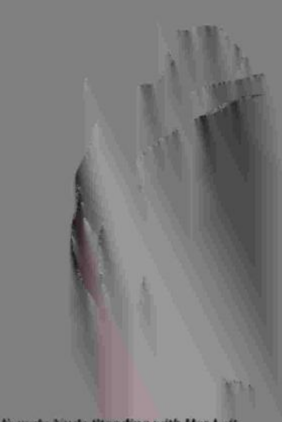
had reached a climax in ancient Rome, part of the people would leave [illegible]

[illegible]









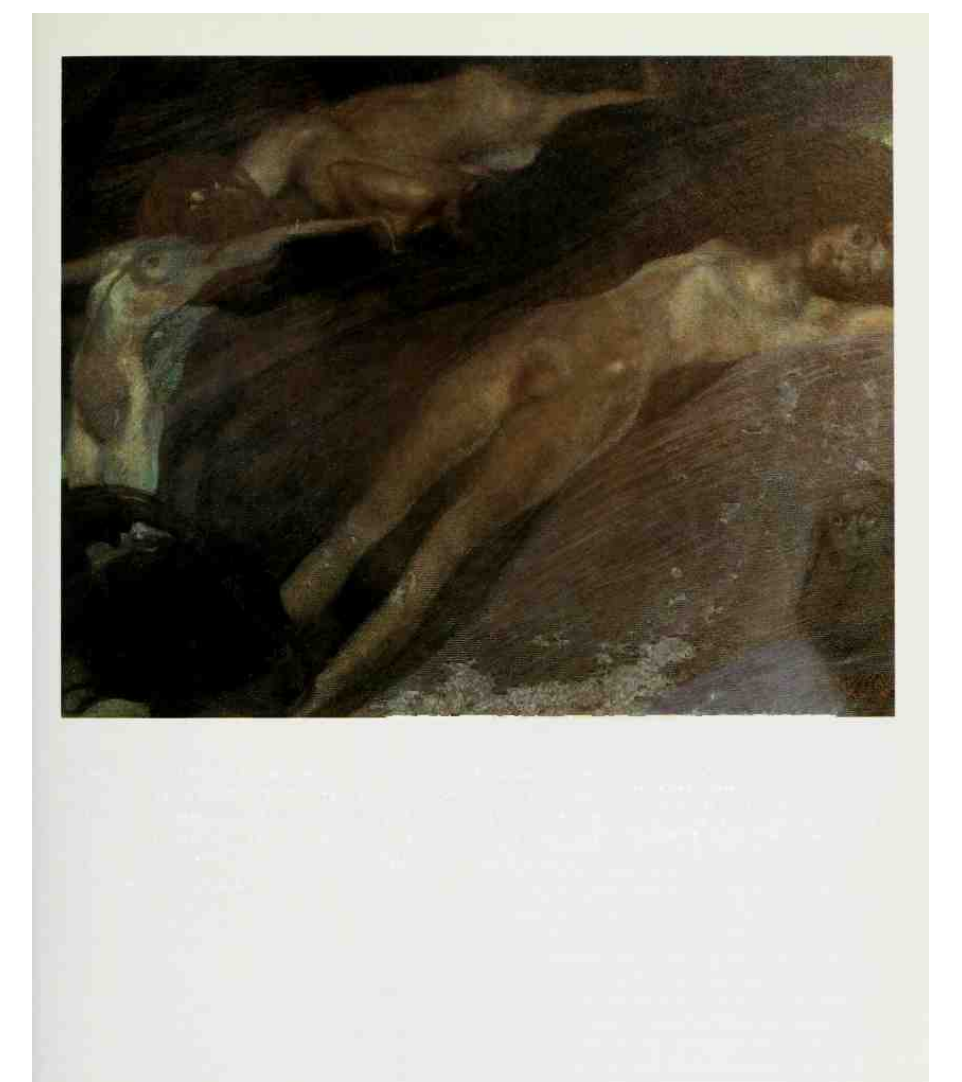
Female Nude Standing with Her Left Arm [illegible]
[illegible]
Albertina, Vienna

The Secession programme met with a political situation that was favourable to its endeavours. The formation of a civil servants' government in 1900 resulted in the final demise of the liberal heritage, while at the same time providing the political conditions for a cultural policy, albeit rather a timid one. Faced with social and national tensions, the cultural sphere seemed to be totally removed from all conflicts. It was hoped that, with the advent of Modernism, art could now serve the formation of a new political identity – "Kunstpolitik". The development of a cultural identity linked to statesmanship did not proceed with recourse to past traditions but in conjunction with the modern, innovative currents of the time.

With an [illegible] policy aimed at pervading all spheres of art and life and realising a dream of "Austrian Beauty" (H. Bahr), the Secession presented an image which lent itself to being promoted as supranational and cosmopolitan in its public dissemination. "Although every artistic development has its national roots," said the Minister of Education von Hartel, "the products of art nevertheless speak a common language, and as they enter into noble competition, they lead to mutual understanding and appreciation." These words, given [illegible] of his speech to the Arts Council, which he had founded in 1899. Concerning the freedom of the arts, von Hartel's programmatic sentence was closely related to Secessionist philosophy. The extent to which the development of art was significantly influenced by this political philosophy can be gathered from the memoirs of Berta Zuckerkandl, an author and one of the leading sympathizers of the Secession: "[illegible] by the motto 'Give our age its art and art its freedom', I plunged into the battle. It was a matter of defending a genuine Austrian culture which proudly professed its loyalty to the nations united under its flag ... Austria was proud of its diversity, which had crystallized into an unequal, unique whole."[22]

In [illegible] years the liberalization of Austrian art politics resulted in the systematic promotion of Modernism as well as state-related reform in the cultural sector. Backed [illegible] cultural politics, in 1903 the Modern Gallery (Moderne Galerie) was founded, after it had already been advocated by Carl Moll at the first meeting of the Arts Council in 1899. Both the Arts Council and the Modern Gallery were state institutions for the promotion of modern art. However, it was not long before the entire concept of the Gallery changed completely. Not just contemporary art but Austrian art of all periods was to be shown in a museum called the Royal and Imperial Austrian State Gallery. Indeed, it is interesting to note that state promotion of art in the first decades of the 20th century meant that it was [illegible] and [illegible] in line with the patriotic elements of statesmanship that prevailed in Austria at the time.

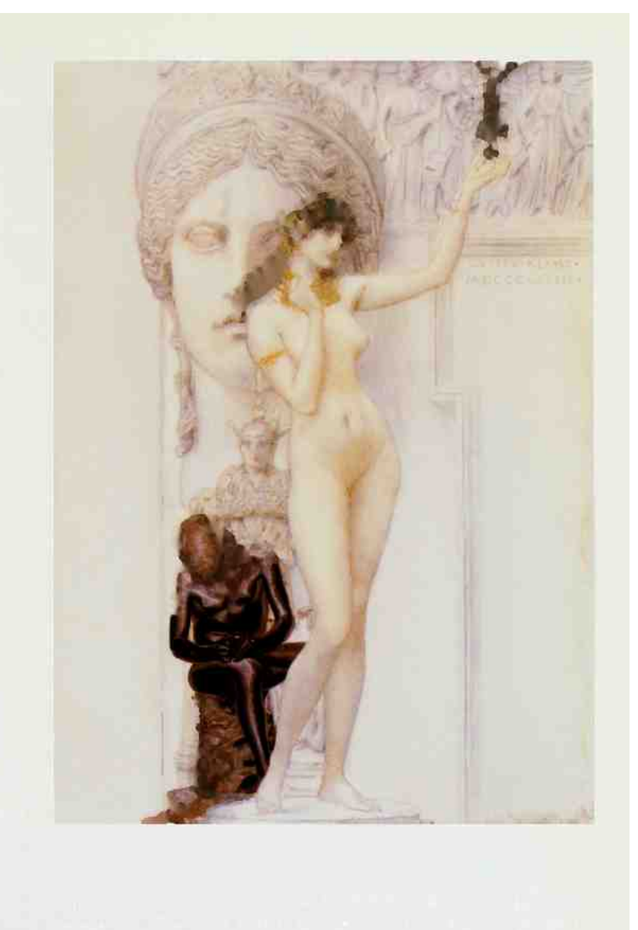
In the same year, Secessionists succeeded in occupying key positions in cultural politics. Otto Wagner was an influential member of the Academy of Fine Arts and, together with Alfred Roller, belonged to the Arts Council. The School of Applied Art, too, was soon taken over by Secessionists in a coup de main. Extensive reforms were initiated under its principal, Baron Felician von Myrbach, and from

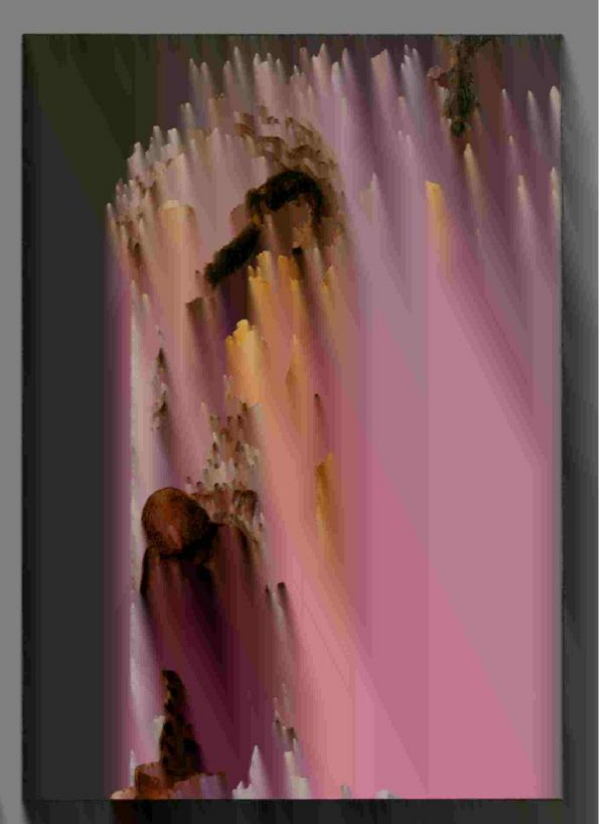




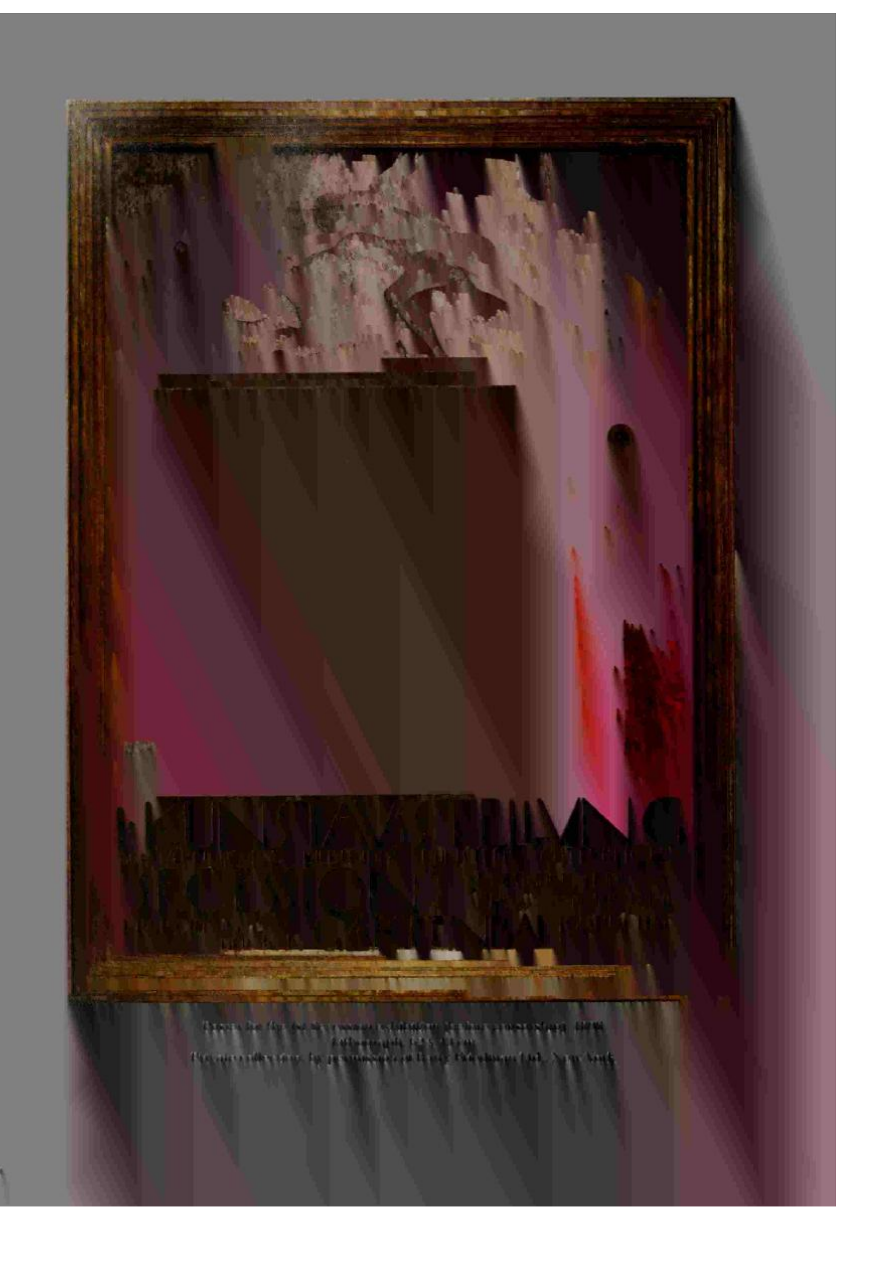
tioned under the stage designer of the Court Opera House, Alfred Roller. Secession members such as Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser and Arthur Strasser joined the School. As a result of these reforms, the School of Applied Art – and, cooperating closely with it, the Viennese Workshops – became the institutional basis for a "breakthrough of Modernism" in Vienna.

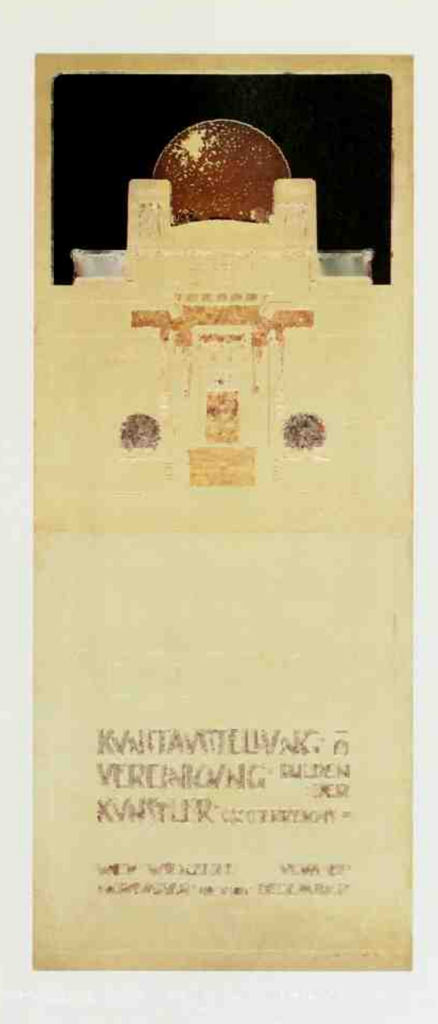






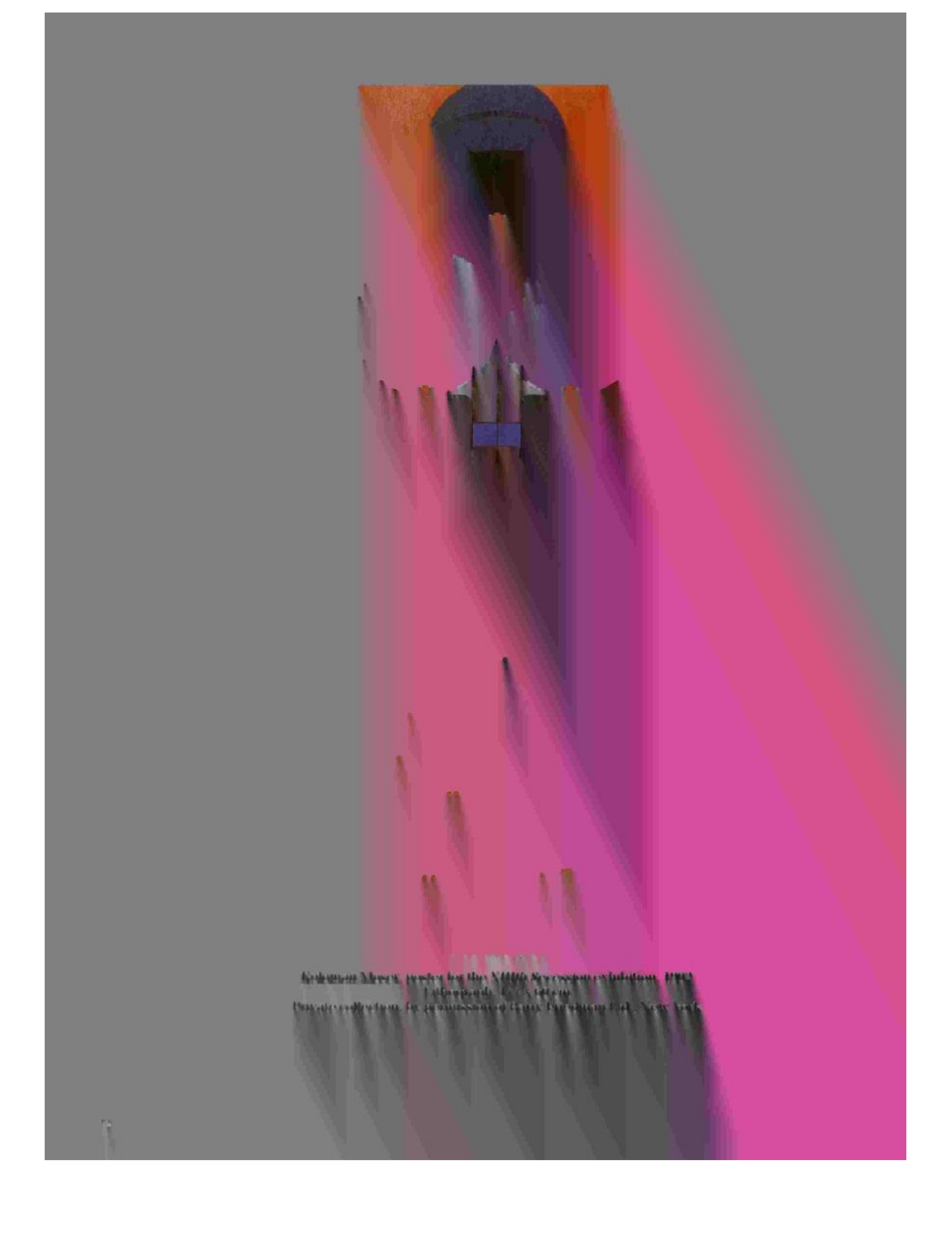

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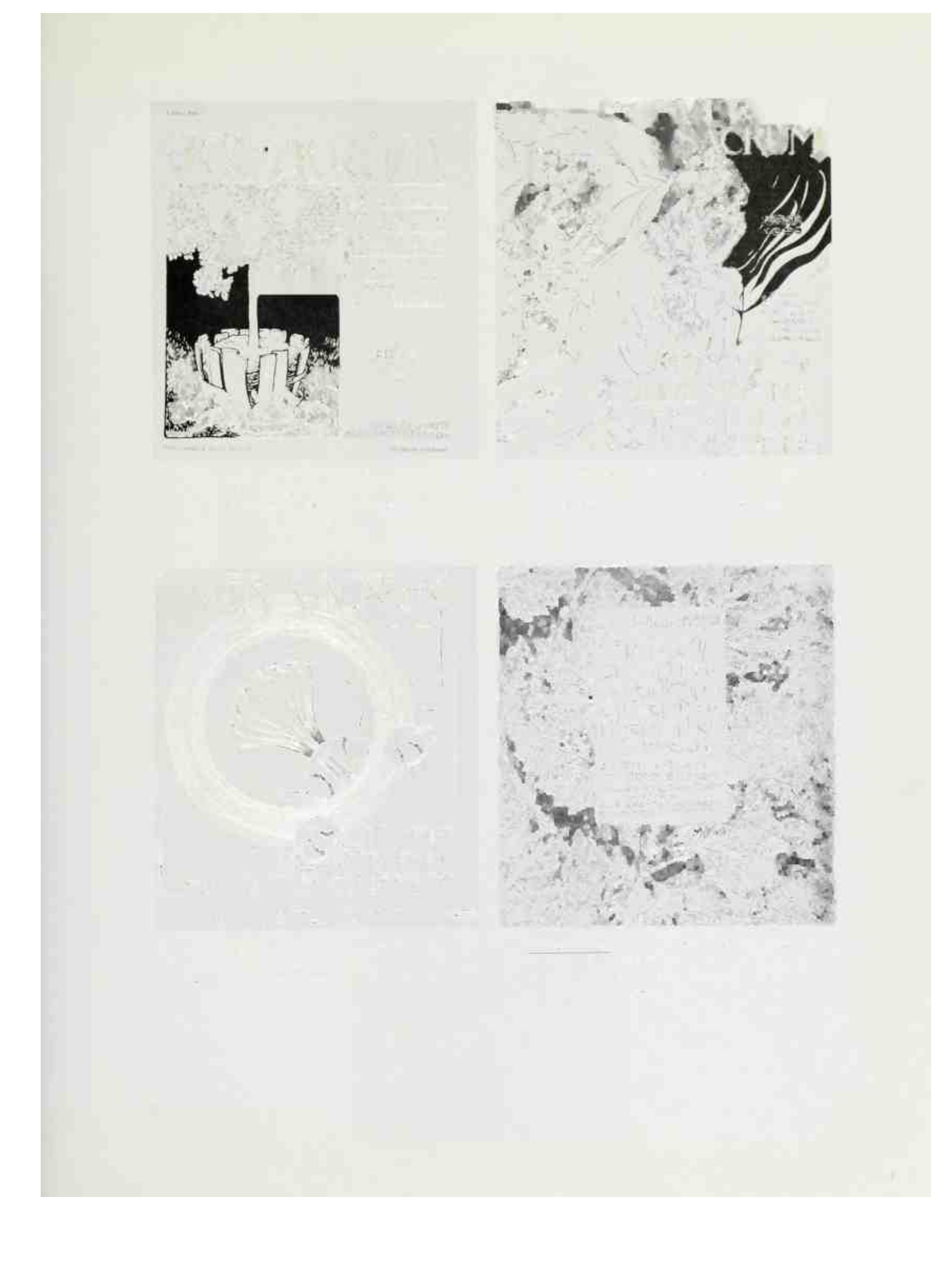

KUNSTAUSSTELLUNG D
VEREINIGUNG BILDEN
DER
KÜNSTLER ÖSTERREICHS

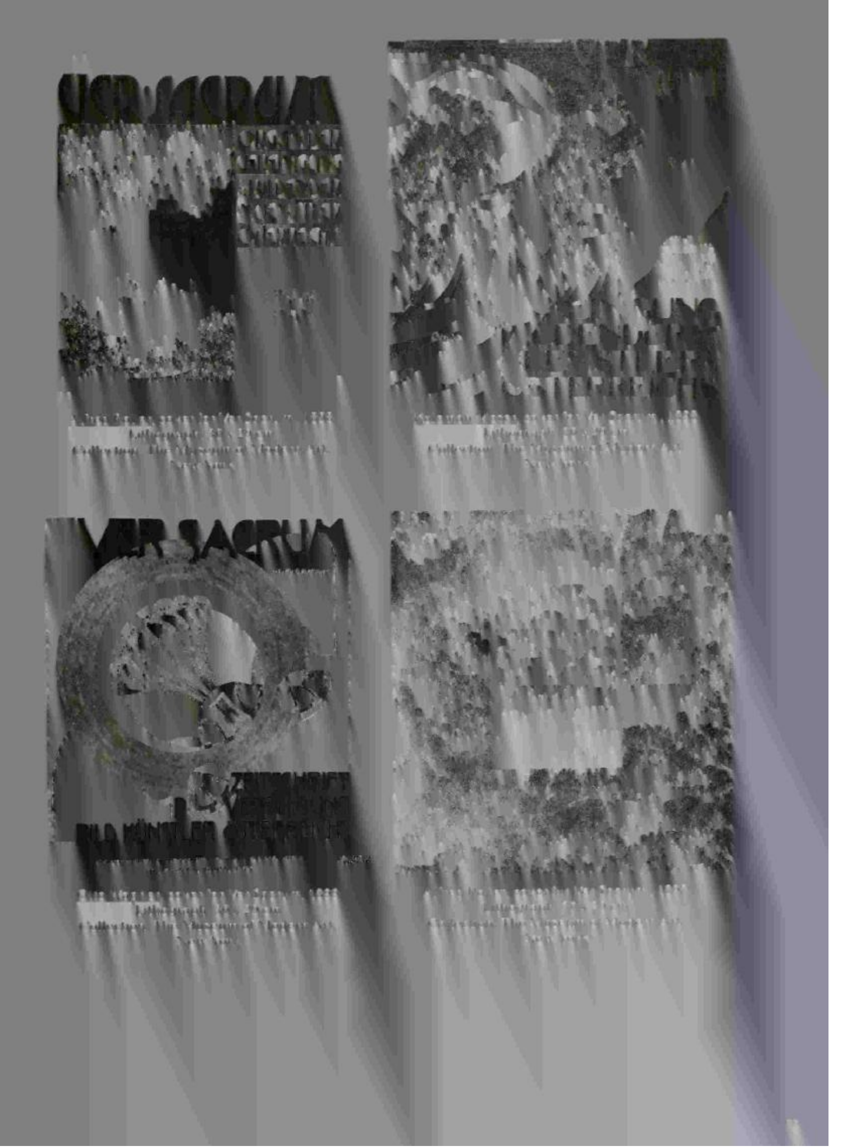


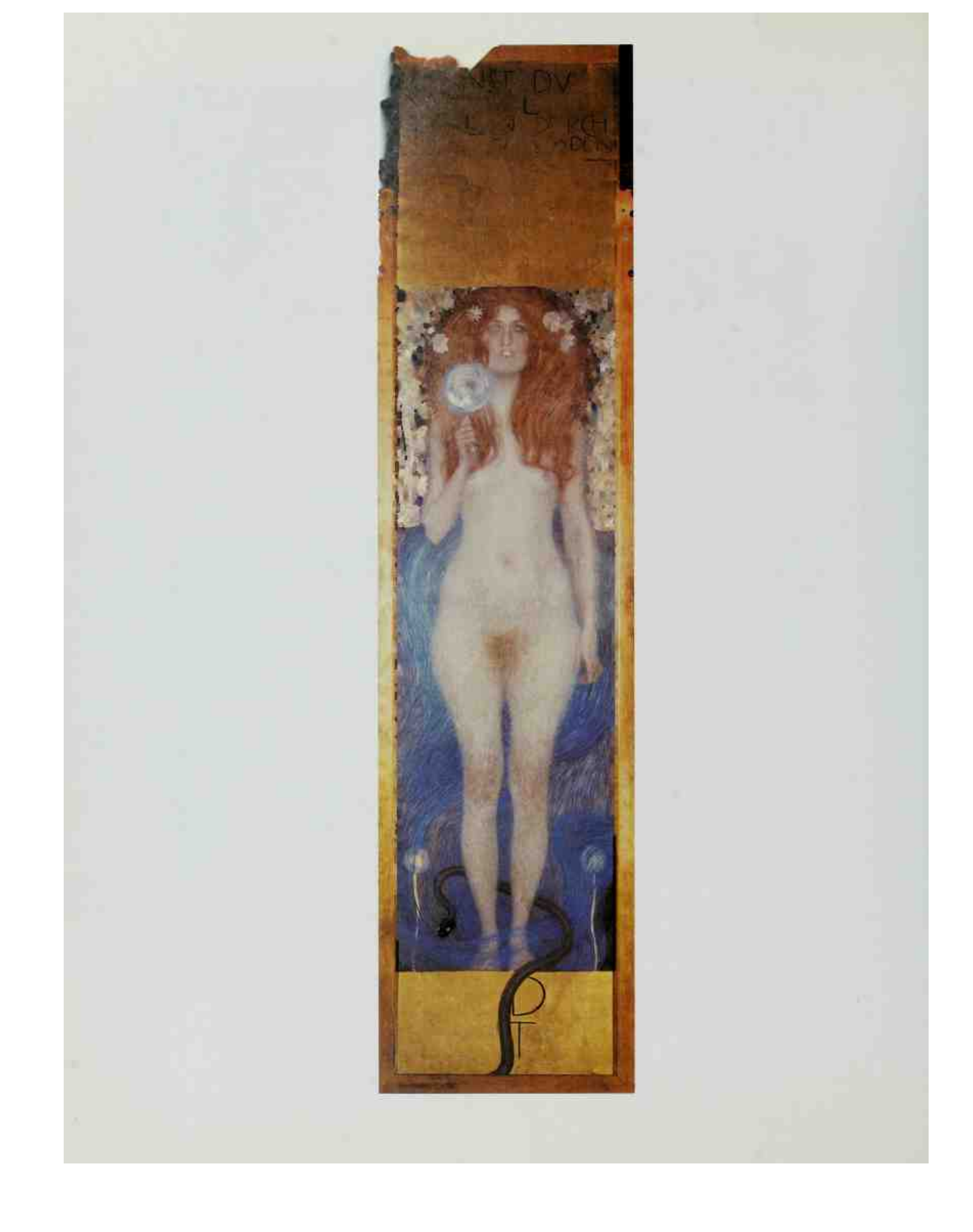

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Koloman Moser, poster for the XIIIth Secession exhibition, 1902
Lithograph, [illegible]
Private collection, by permission of [illegible], New York

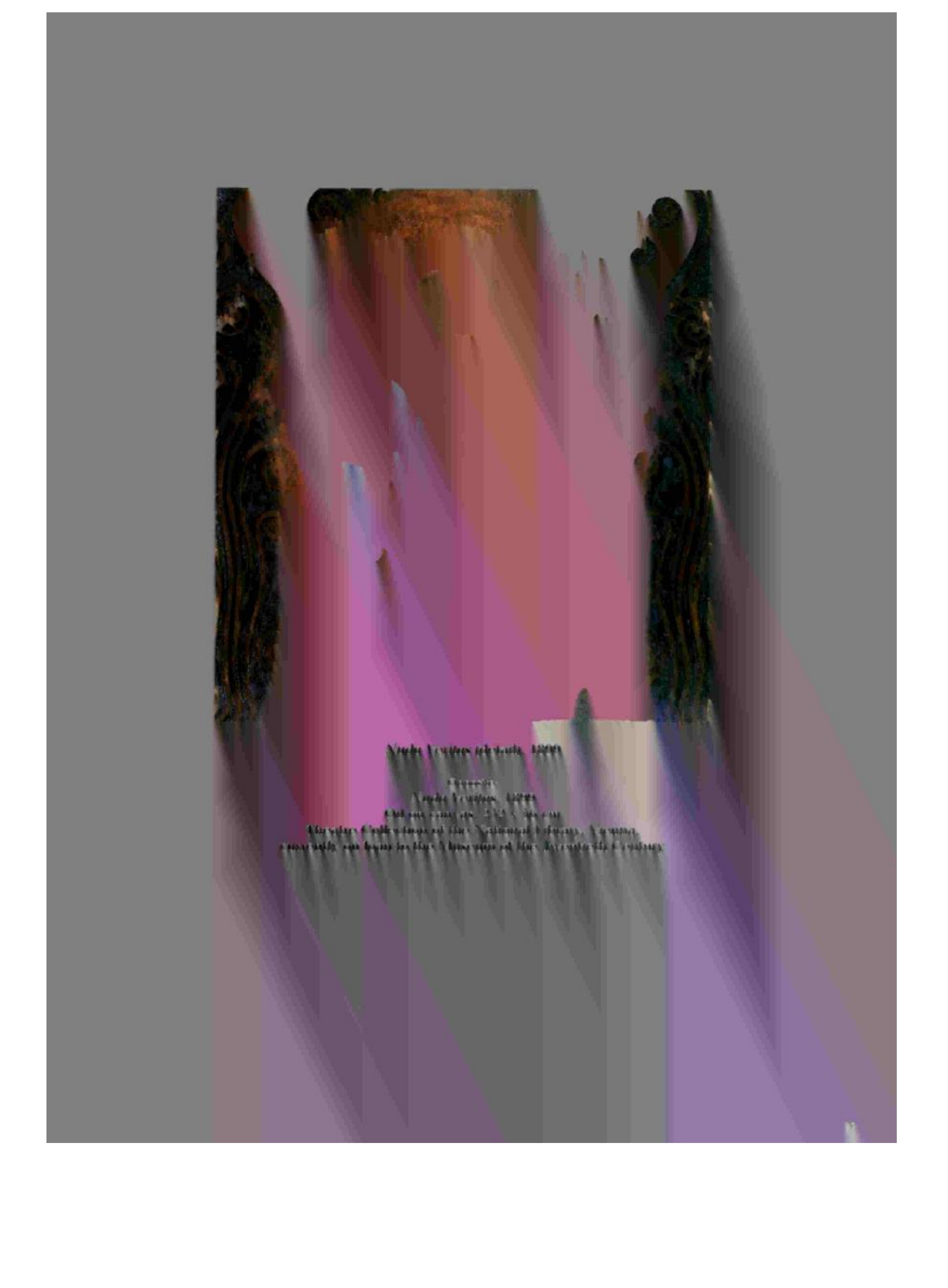


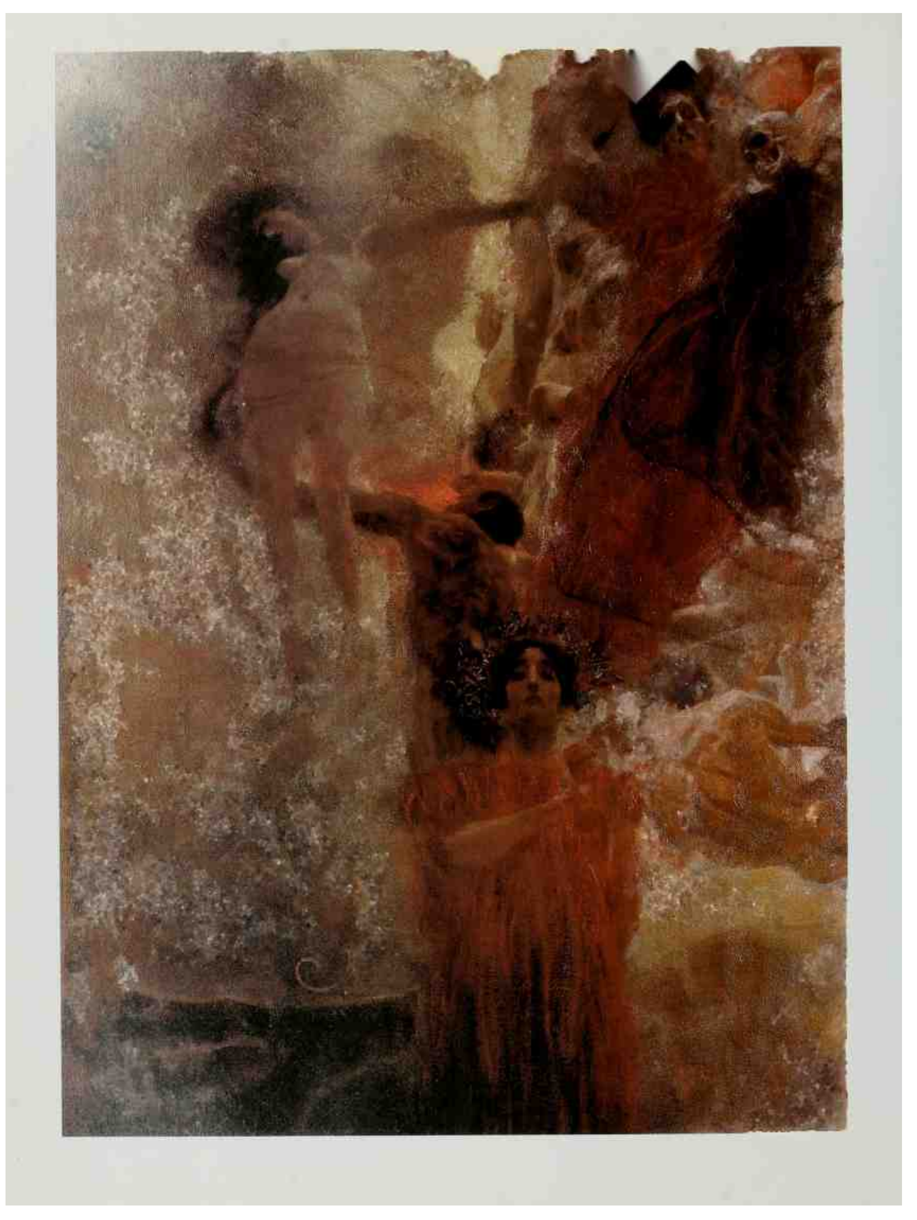


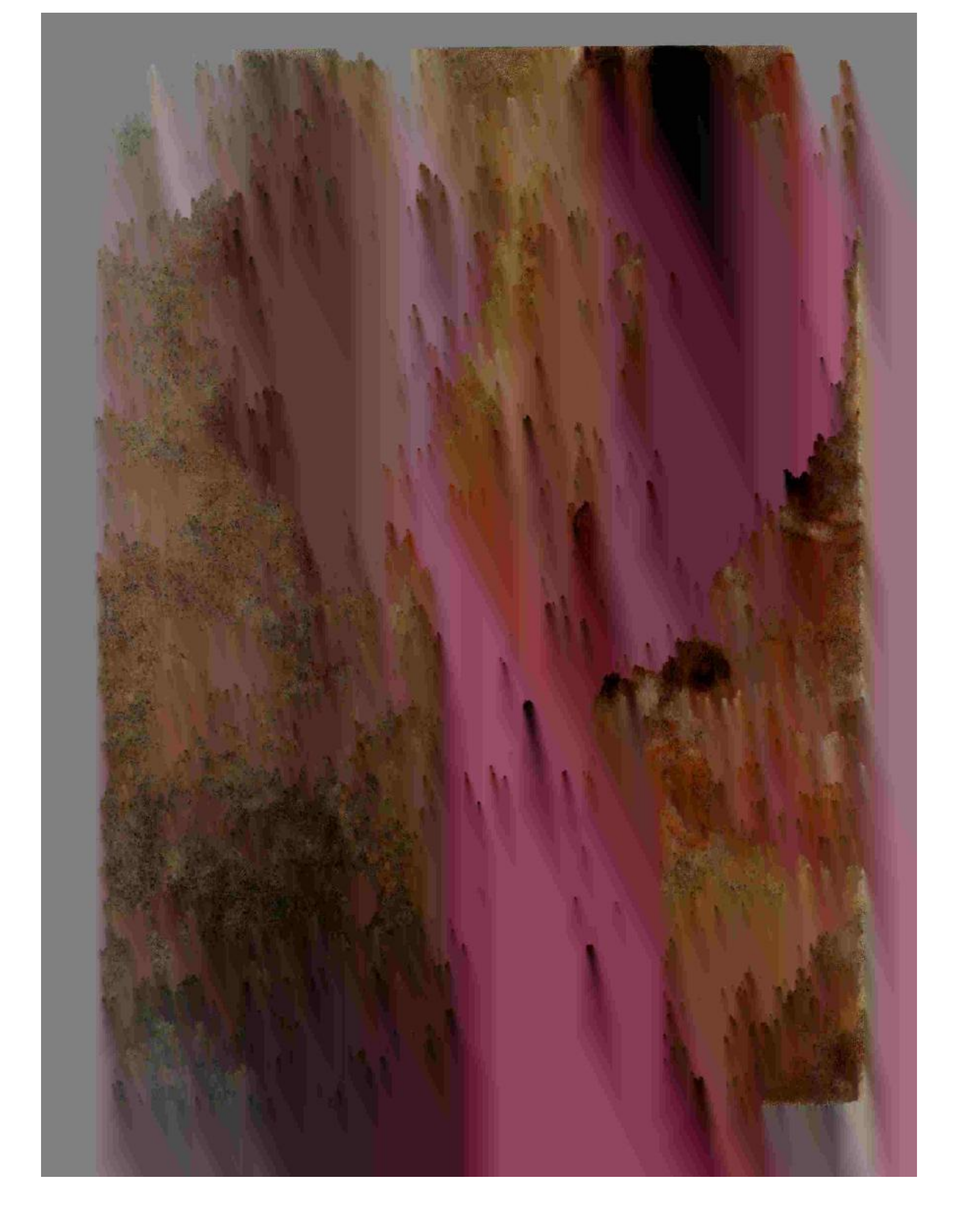














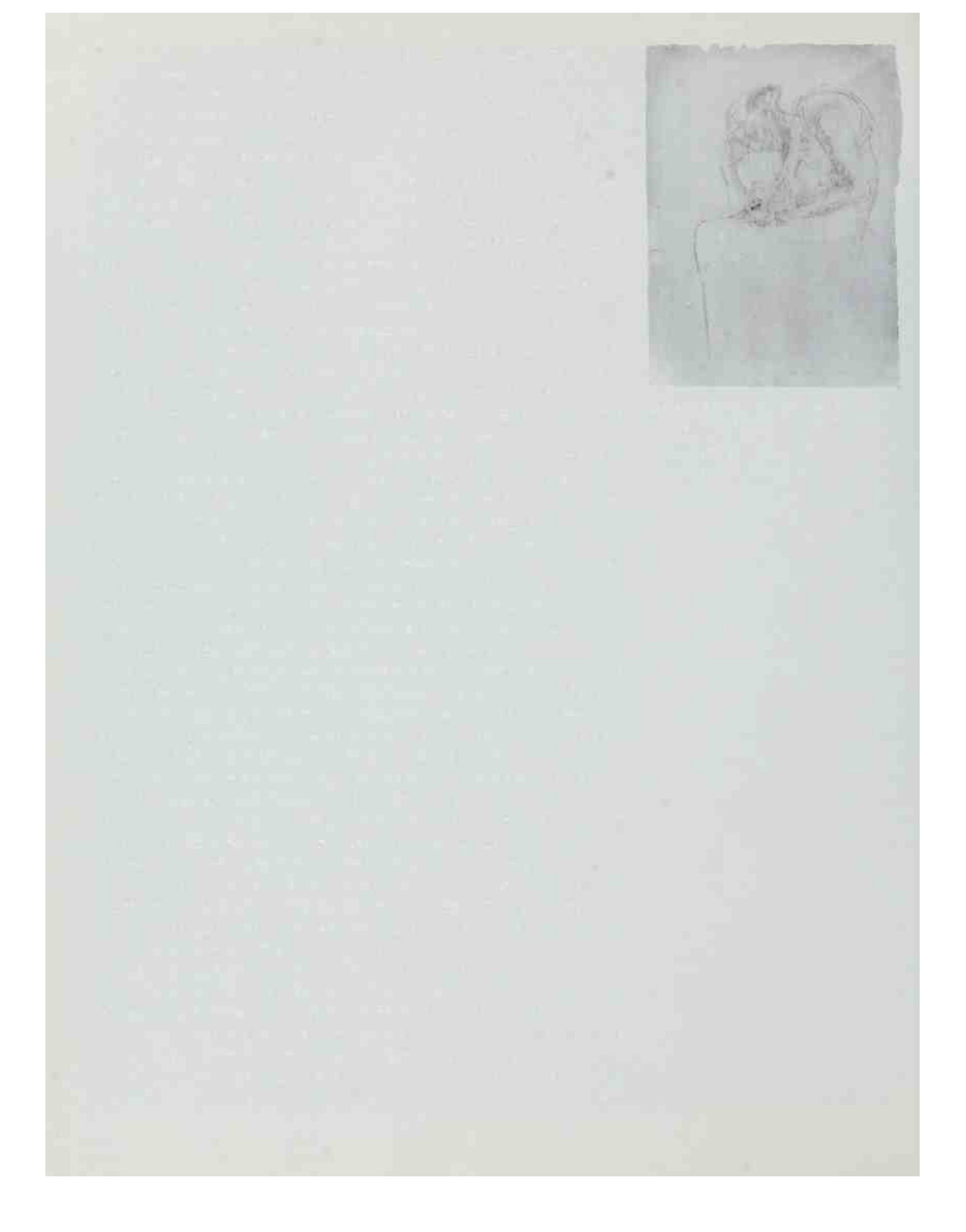
The Faculty Paintings

[illegible]



[illegible]

[illegible]



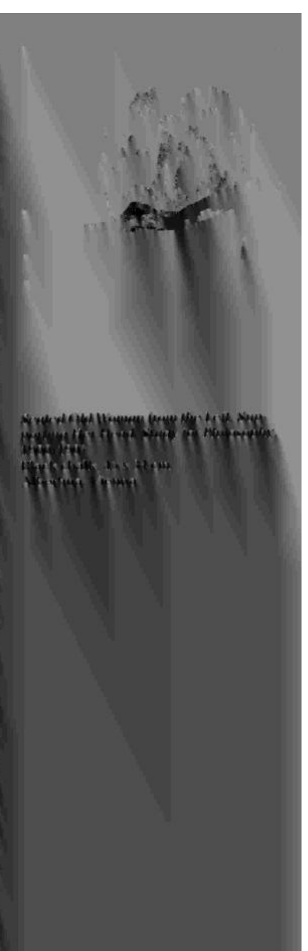
[illegible] of sexual procreation from the first stirrings of existence to [illegible] decline as they sink into the grave. This is briefly interrupted by an intoxicating moment of loving union followed by a painful process of drifting apart. Love has been a disappointment, bringing neither happiness nor knowledge. Fate, however, remains unfathomed. [illegible] knowledge [illegible] eternally veiled cosmic mystery, the human species is forever struggling for happiness and knowledge, while remaining a toy in the hands of nature, a tool used for the unfathomable purpose of procreation.[illegible]

Indeed, nothing in the painting seems to suggest that philosophical and academic pursuit produces any rational, socially beneficial results. The composition is as blind, open and ambiguous as the various states of the individuals and couples. Neither do these groups and movements have any recognizable and/or identifiable time dimension. Unlike the history paintings which Klimt, among others, had produced a few years earlier, his *Philosophy* now displays a spatial and temporal dilemma that no longer allows a rational connection of the events with the present. Klimt was no longer concerned with communicating an optimistic [illegible] of history.

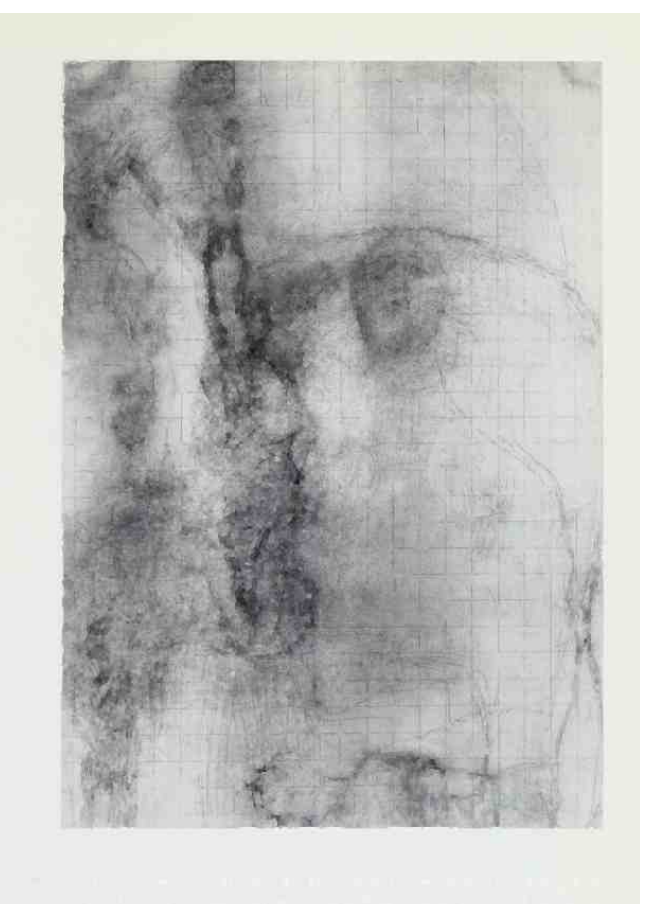
Not only did Klimt's *Philosophy* contradict the prevailing academic view of science, it also gave an accurate illustration of the most widespread idea at the end of the century. It was believed that the constant and purposeful progress of history was ultimately governed by cyclical forces of nature inaccessible to human rational thought. The social impotence of the liberal middle classes was seen as embedded in a unknowable, regular cycle of nature in which the individual was relieved of the necessity to act, while at the same time becoming an observer of himself and the mysterious happenings of the world. Systematic "rational" [illegible] did not seem possible.

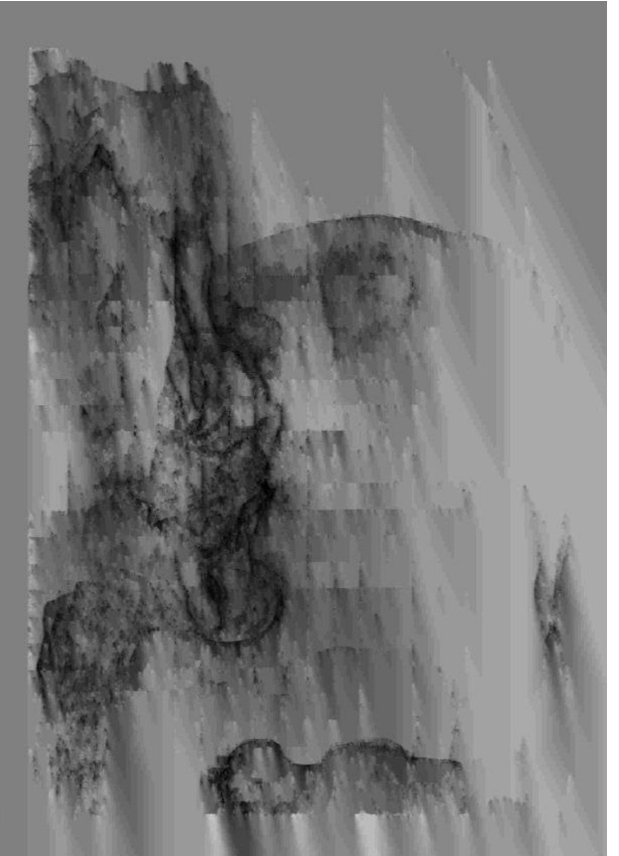
This view of life as a theatre was an important feature of contemporary art and culture and had also been characteristic of Klimt's earliest works, when external circumstances actually focused his mind on the theatre. At the time, he was working for the theatre, making designs, stage curtains, designing the [illegible] and also part of the decorations for the staircase of the Court Museum of Art History, built so that visitors could move around imagining they were on a stage. In fact, the "scenic architecture" of this [illegible] staircase served a dual purpose: on the one hand, the [illegible] was able to celebrate its own role as an [illegible] in the form of paintings and statues, and on the other hand the middle-class public, as it were, were in a position to display themselves, thus [illegible] their new social status through a public demonstration of their share in the country's culture.

Klimt's "[illegible]" [illegible] in *Philosophy* [illegible] [illegible] historical [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible]. Although it contains various [illegible] elements from some [illegible] historical periods (such as ancient mythology), it [illegible] any [illegible]. [illegible] which [illegible] [illegible] century [illegible] at the turn of the century



Study of Old Woman from the Left, Nude [illegible] the Head [illegible] *Philosophy*, [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]



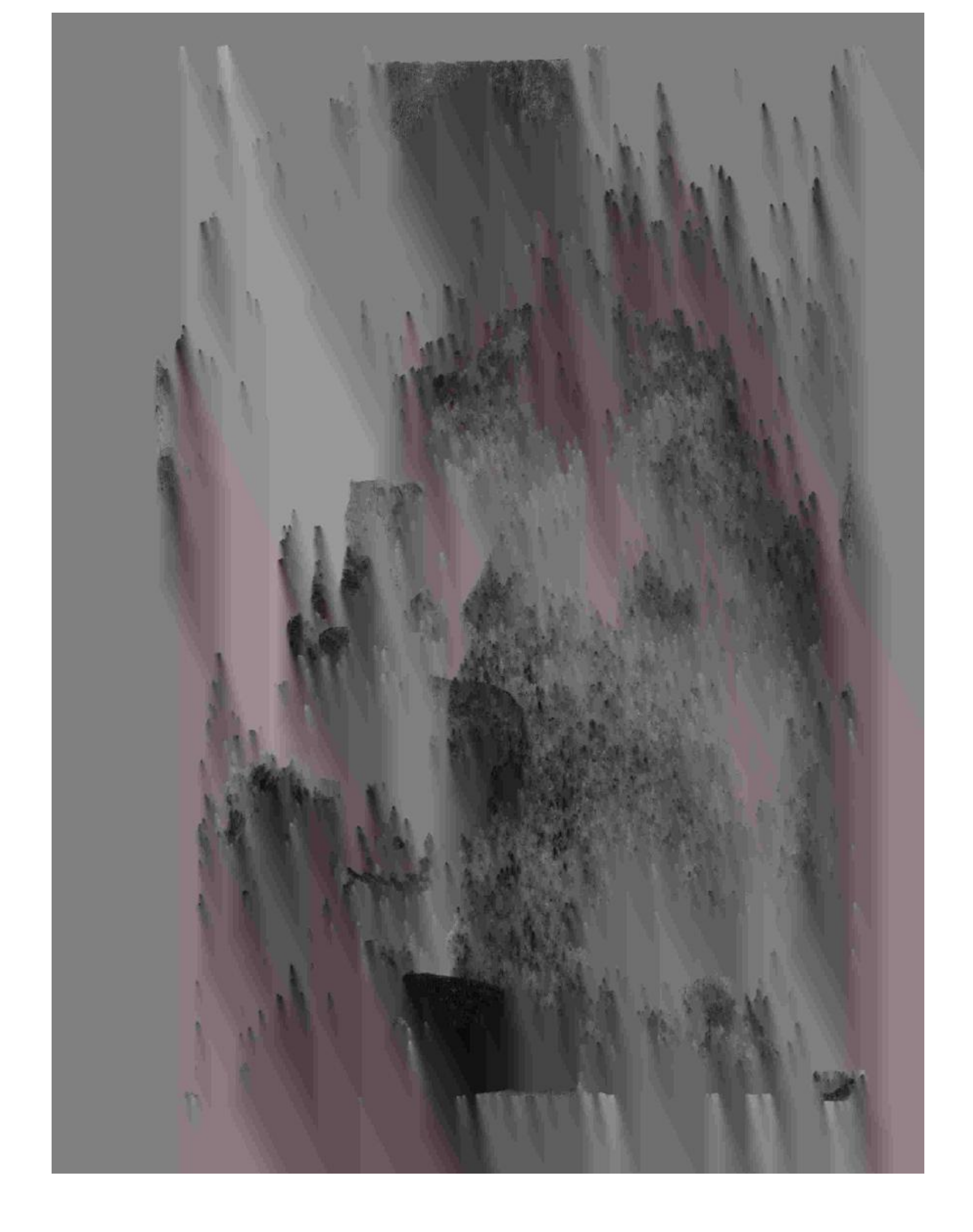


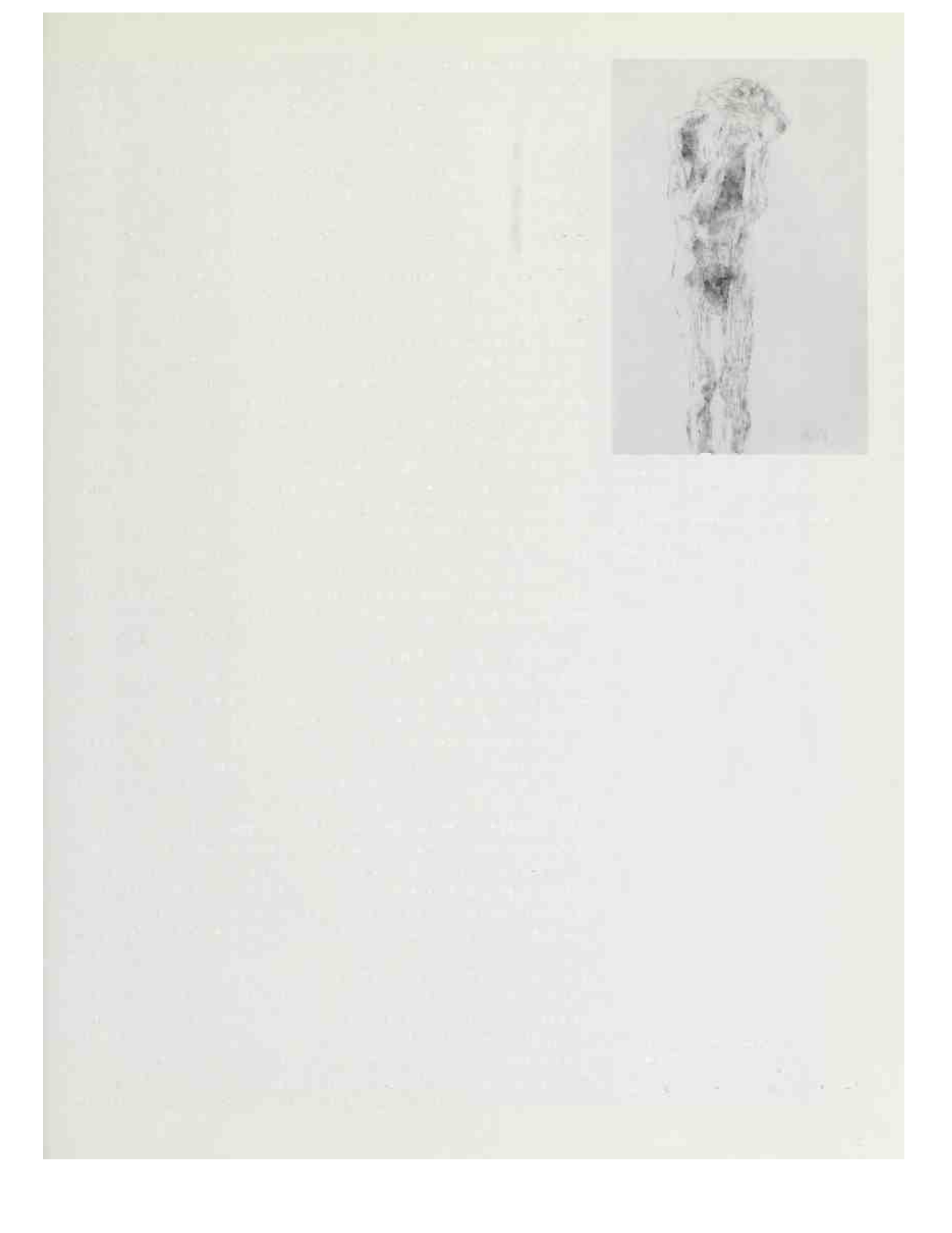
Transfer Sketch for *Philosophy*,
1900–1907
Black chalk, pencil, [illegible] and ink,
[illegible]
Historisches Museum, Vienna

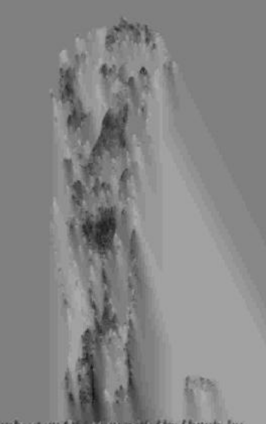
replaced these by nature – a nature which was without history and brought only timeless cyclical change. This cycle of nature engulfed both morals, passions and emotions, but no longer knowledge or enlightened mind, and thus no longer the idea of man's general domination and subjugation of nature. As a result, the optimism of bourgeois society was undermined, because the domination of nature – furthered by technological developments and capitalist interests – lay at the very core of middle-class faith in progress.

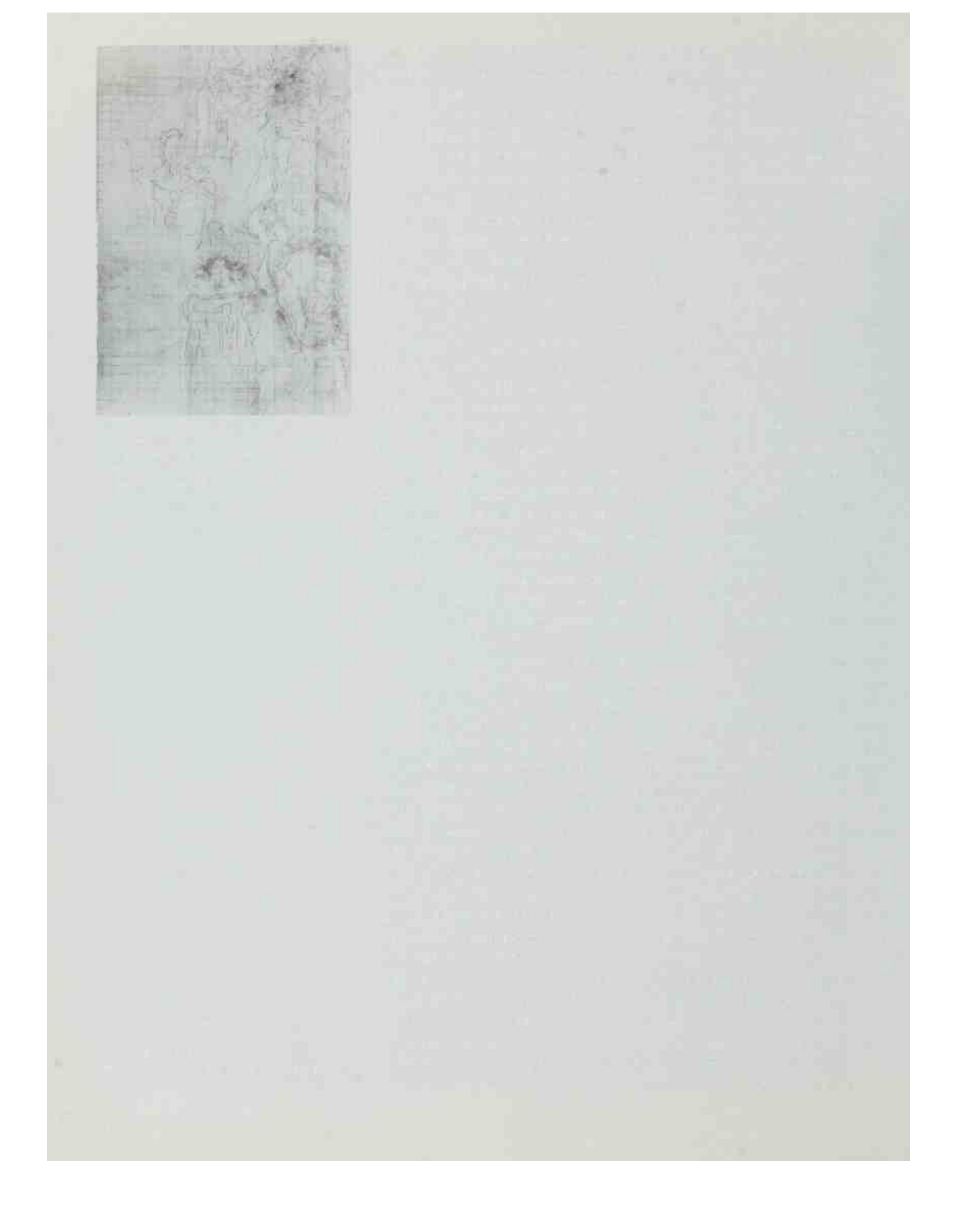
Meanwhile, Klimt no longer had any intention of depicting or celebrating the social institutions and the rational, optimistic role of academic knowledge. This was not how university professors saw and heard the world. Their view of the cosmos of light and darkness was different, and so was their view of its depiction on their ceiling

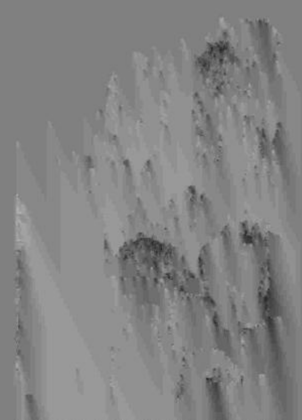












Transfer Sketch for Medicine, 1900–1907
Black chalk, pencil, [illegible]
86 x 62 cm
Albertina, Vienna

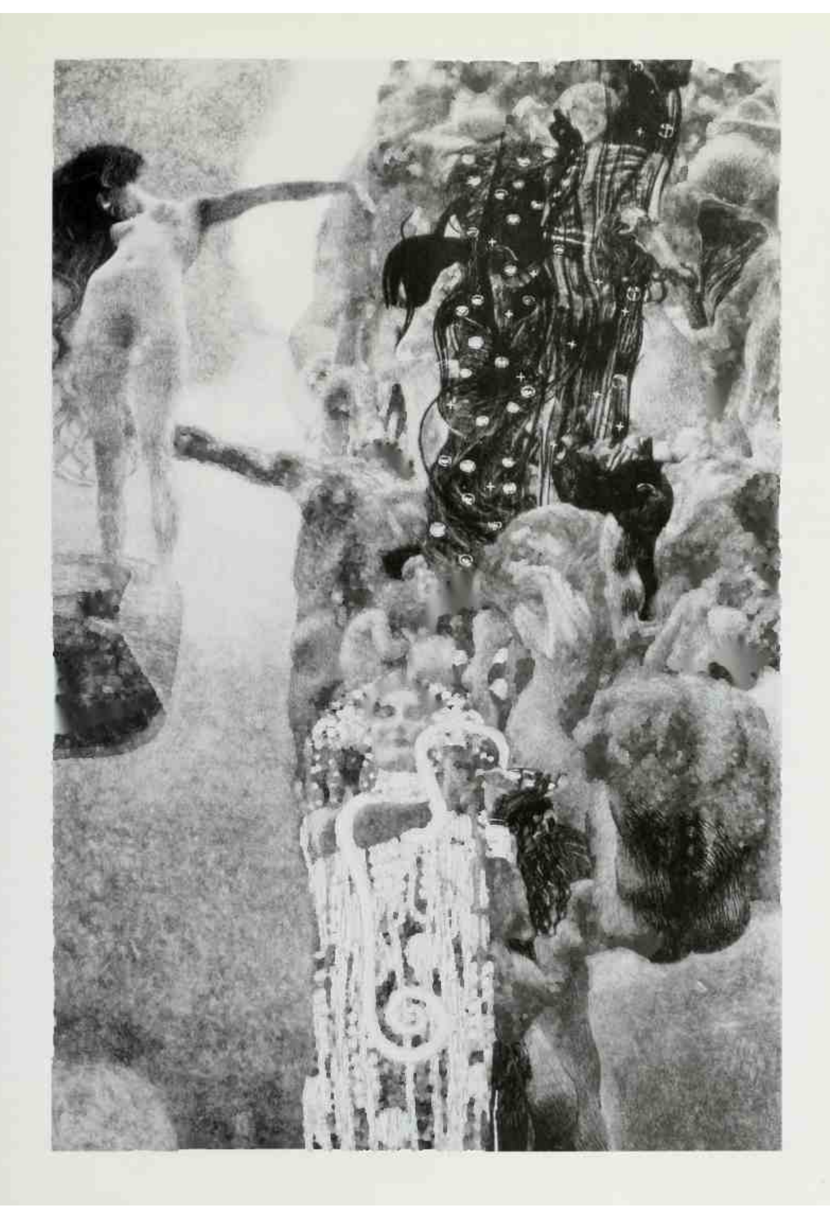
Aside from this symbolism directed against the rational, optimistic self-image of medicine, Klimt's aesthetic devices also caused offense. The Art Nouveau depiction of nudity [illegible] forms and [illegible] – by Karl Kraus, among others – [illegible] led to the confiscation of a Ver Sacrum edition, in which a preliminary study of Medicine had been published. However, [illegible] that the [illegible] depiction of nudity invited criminal prosecution. From the very beginning it was Klimt's allegories in particular that attracted scorn and ridicule, as in Karl Kraus's comments. He described Medicine as a painting "in which the chaotic confusion of decrepit bodies [illegible] the situation in a state hospital." [illegible]

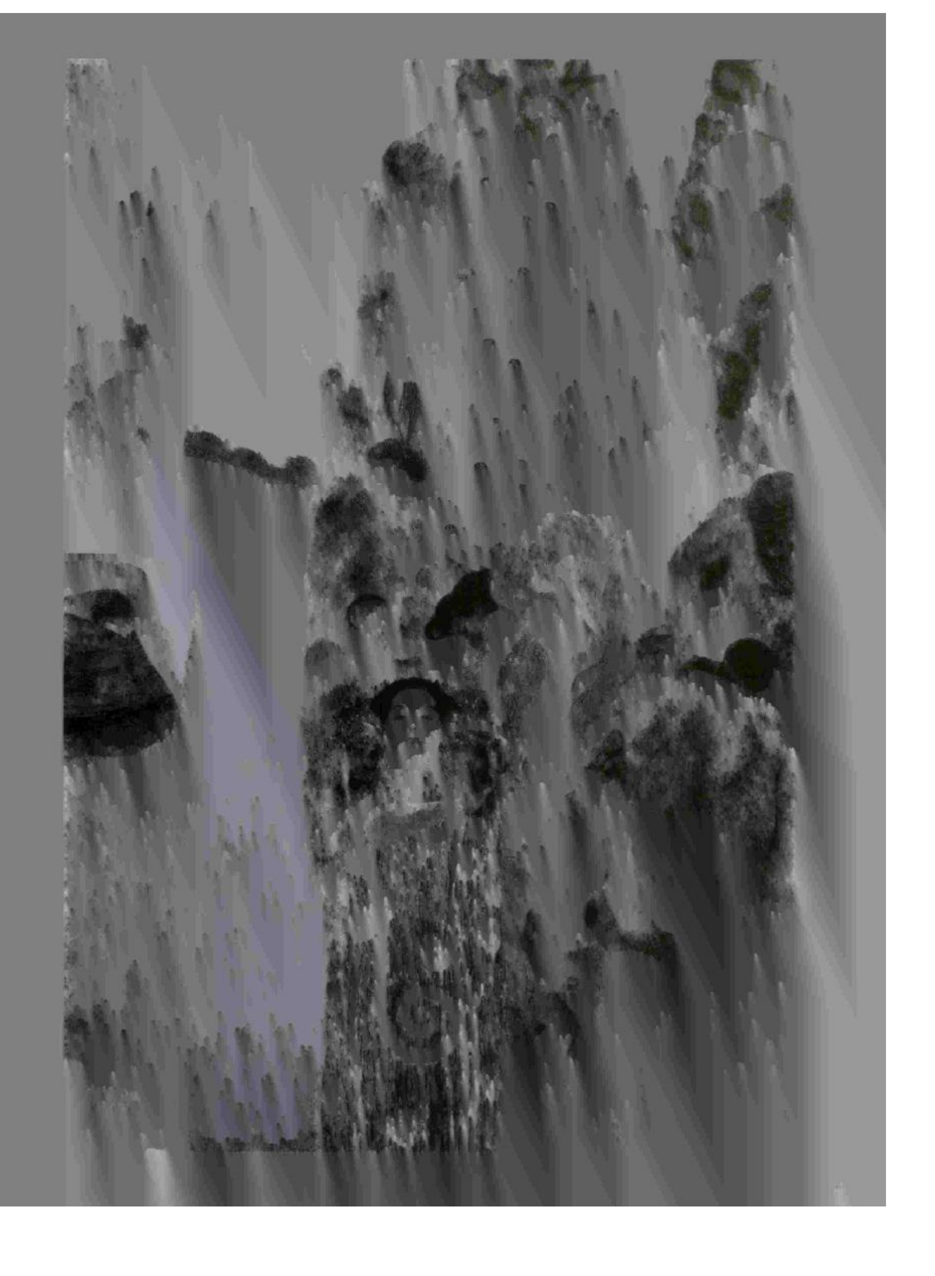
When Medicine was shown to the public, it caused such violent reactions that the [illegible] the *Faculty Paintings* were [illegible] in the upper house of the Austrian parliament. This made it impossible to use art as a medium for overcoming political barriers. The Minister of Education, von Hartel, who was one of the patrons of the Secession, came under pressure to distance himself. "Again and again the Minister [illegible]," said Klimt, "that I had become an embarrassment to them. Now, for an artist … there is nothing more distressing than working for and being paid by a client who does not wholeheartedly and with his entire understanding give his full support to the artist … Ever since this unfortunate State affair [i.e. the *Faculty Paintings*] there have been [illegible] von Hartel, the Minister, [illegible] other works. And it seems as if the Minister of Education is now beginning to imagine that he really does bear such a responsibility … In everything I have done, I have been a terrible embarrassment to the Minister …" [illegible] As a result, Klimt's application for a lectureship at the Academy of Fine Arts failed.

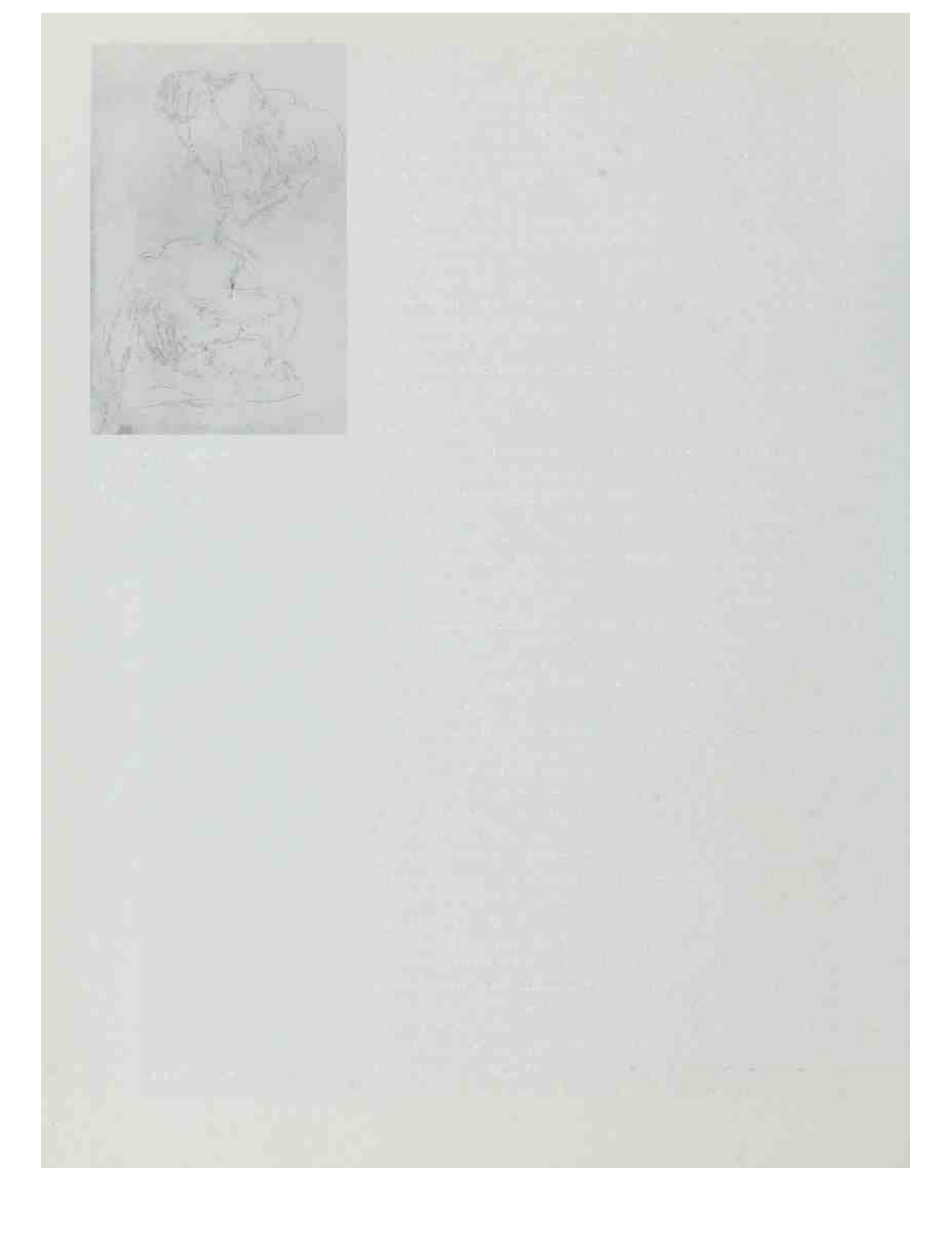
The aggressive course of Klimt's third university painting, *Jurisprudence*, is seen by Schorske as the artist's response to the rejection and disdain that he had been suffering. Although there is virtually no corroborating evidence from Klimt, Schorske concludes – mainly from the formal changes that took place between the preliminary drafts and the final version – that Klimt must have undergone a profound personal crisis and period of reorientation, which left its mark on his art. As in the two preceding works, the legal apparatus is not shown as a socially beneficial institution but as a punitive and vengeful power with sweeping sexual ambitions.

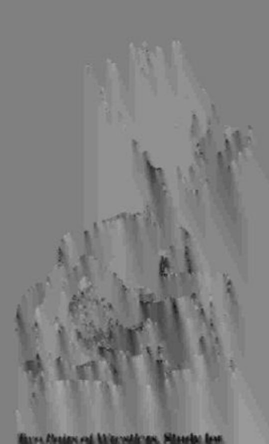
The centre of the painting is occupied by a powerless victim, an emaciated naked bent old man, held tightly in the grip of an octopus-like creature that almost devours him. This totally [illegible] gesture is [illegible] by three Furies, serving as "avenging [illegible]" (Schorske), who have been sent by the three allegorical figures *Truth, Justice and Law*. These figures [illegible] from the scene. It can hardly be denied that the painting is a reference to Klimt's own situation, and – compared with *Medicine* and *Philosophy* – its composition reflects the general message very clearly. In *Philosophy* and particularly *Medicine* the artist subject the contradiction between a [illegible] depiction of the figures and ambiguity

Medicine, final version, 1907
Medicine
Oil on canvas, 430 x 300 cm
Destroyed by fire at Schloss Immendorf in 1945









Two Pairs of Wrestlers, Study for Medicine, [illegible]
[illegible]
Albertina, Vienna

ssionist atmosphere at the expense of an unambiguous message. In *Jurisprudence*, by contrast, he chose such a low perspective that the space seems extremely condensed and distorted while at the same time allowing demarcation of the figures. Although the representatives of the law are at the top of the painting, where they have the greatest importance within the hierarchy, our attention is initially absorbed by the larger figures: the old man, the victim and thus the centre of this allegory, on the lowermost level and the three "Furies of the Law" who – as the executives of justice and mythical instruments of revenge – seem more important than justice itself.

The scene is not one of diffuse space creating an atmosphere of ambiguity, indistinct and unsatisfactory content; instead, the area is ornamentally segmented and fixes our attention on the brilliantly delineated individuals, particularly the male nude in the foreground.

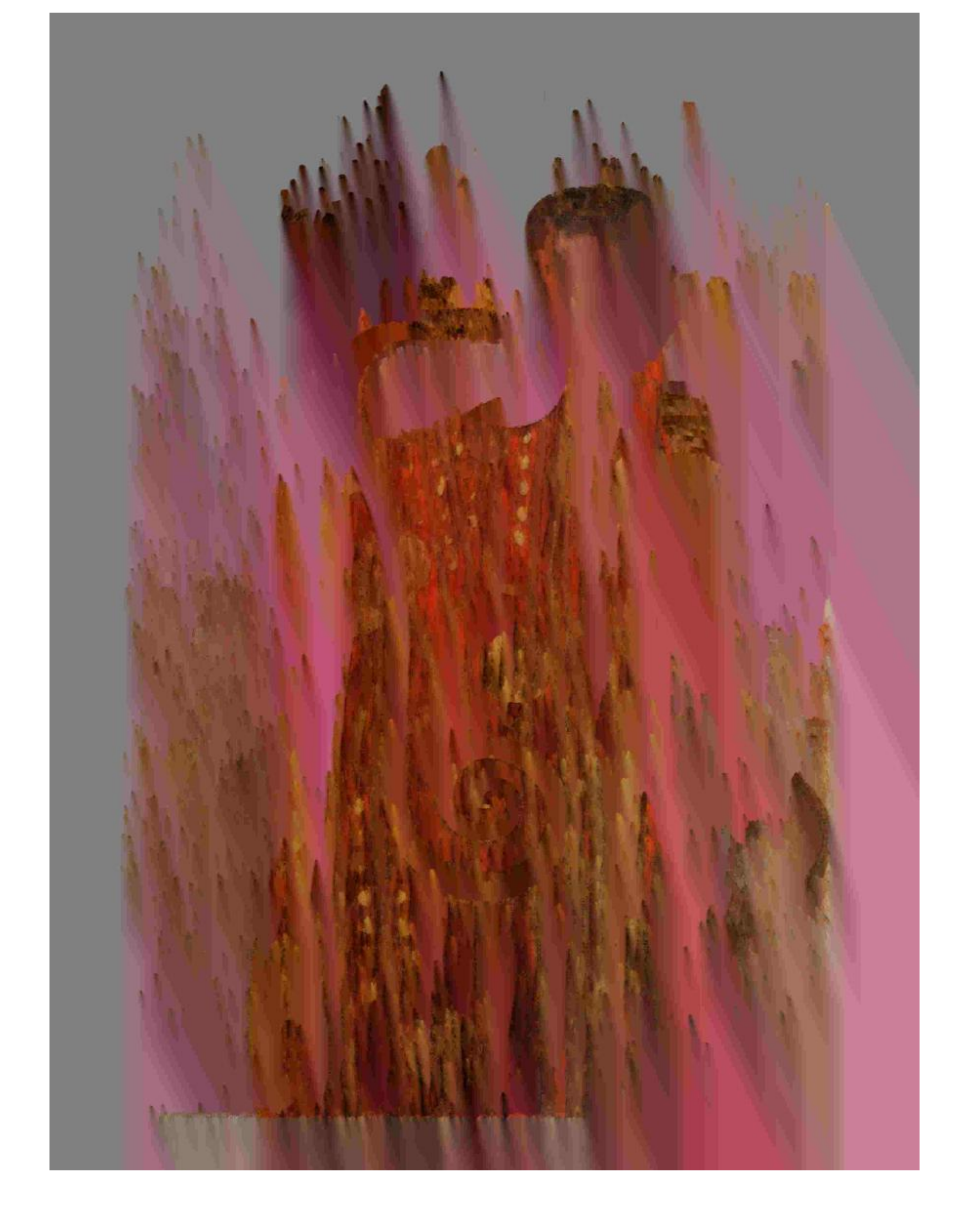
Incidentally, none of the three Faculty Paintings takes account of the viewer's perspective of a ceiling painting. Klimt always avoided the illusion of "breaking through" the ceiling. Thus separate paintings were to "open it up", as it were (the fourth one was to be painted by Franz Matsch).

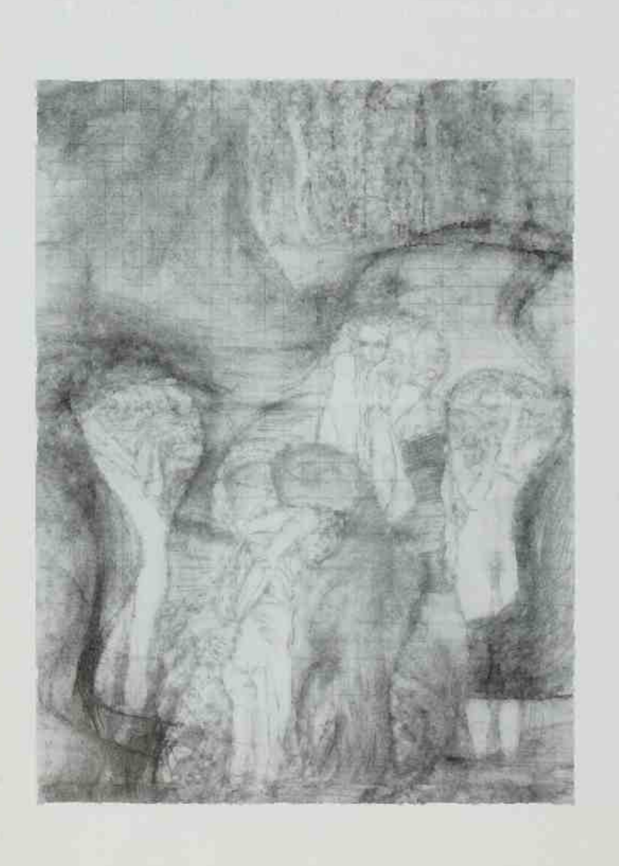
However, Klimt had not only refrained from directing his criticism mainly or exclusively at the socio-political role of the law. Instead he shifted his attack into a mythical realm of fabled creatures, while concentrating on the male fear of suppressed female voluptuousness as well as delusions of punishment. "Klimt's painting is mainly dominated by a fear of castration; the male victim – passive, dejected and impotent – has been caught in a [illegible] trap, with an octopus surrounding him like a female womb. The Furies who are supervising the execution are, at once, femmes fatales of the fin de siècle and Greek Maenads. However, Klimt gave them the cruel, [illegible] expressions of ancient Maenads ... Klimt's world of law is divided into two parts, with the three figures of Justice at the top and three Furies at the bottom. This is reminiscent of the proverbial resolution in Aeschylus' Oresteia, in which Athena establishes the precedence of rational law and patriarchal power over the matriarchal law of blood vengeance. Once Athena has built her law court – the Areopagus – for the foundation of society, she persuades the Furies to become its patronesses. She thereby robs them of their power by making them part of her own temple. Thus, reason and culture subjugate their [illegible] instinct and barbarism. Klimt reversed this ancient symbolism by giving the Furies their original power again and showing that the law has not succeeded in overcoming violence and cruelty, but has merely concealed and legitimised them."[illegible]

Schorske points out that the main figure, which has often been interpreted as a self-portrait, also expresses guilt: "The phantasies of sexual punishment in Klimt's Furies lead gradually into the context of the renderings [illegible] the liberation of Eros."[illegible] However, the theory that Klimt's attacks on the law for denying man's instincts might have instilled in the artist feelings of guilt is not entirely convincing, at least not without qualification. As there is no reference to the social order [illegible] of the law, it seems that the "guilt" of the male victim of the law

Hygieia, detail from Medicine, 1900–1907

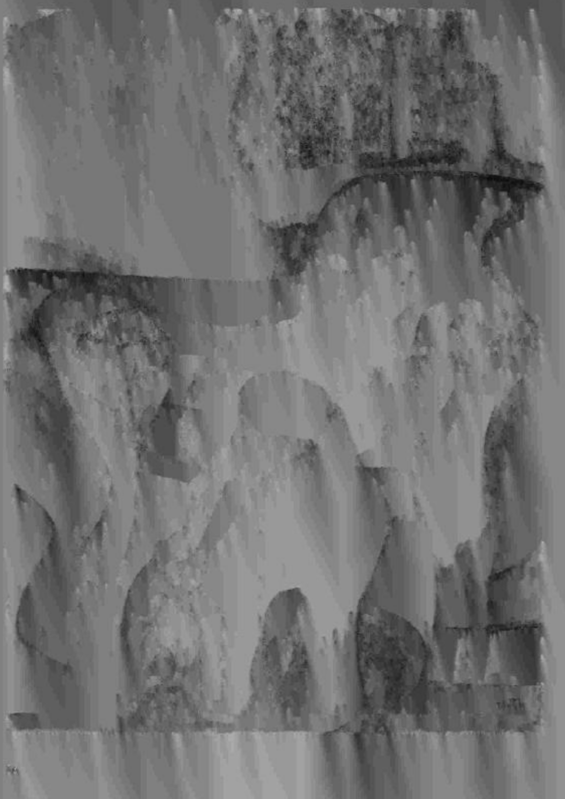




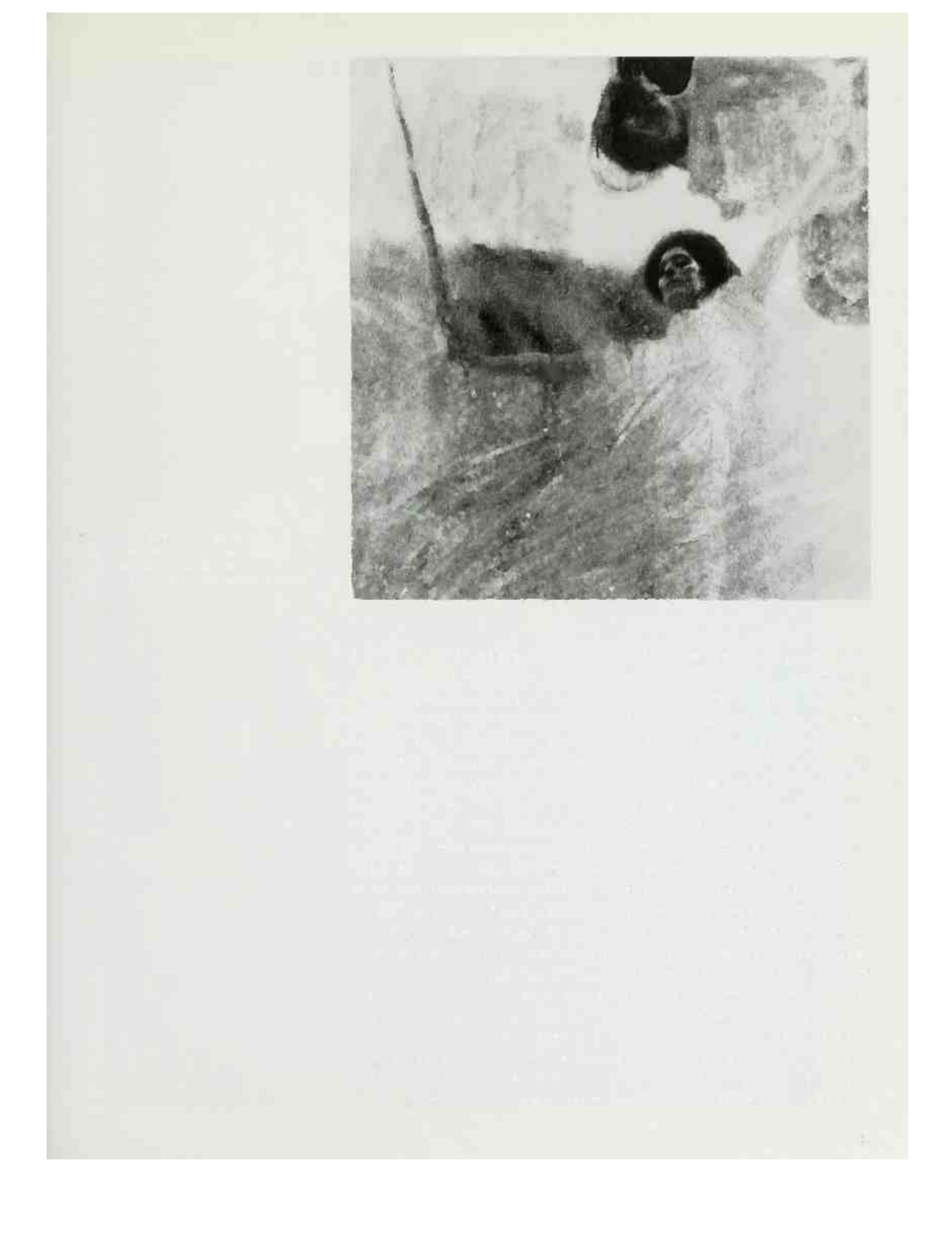


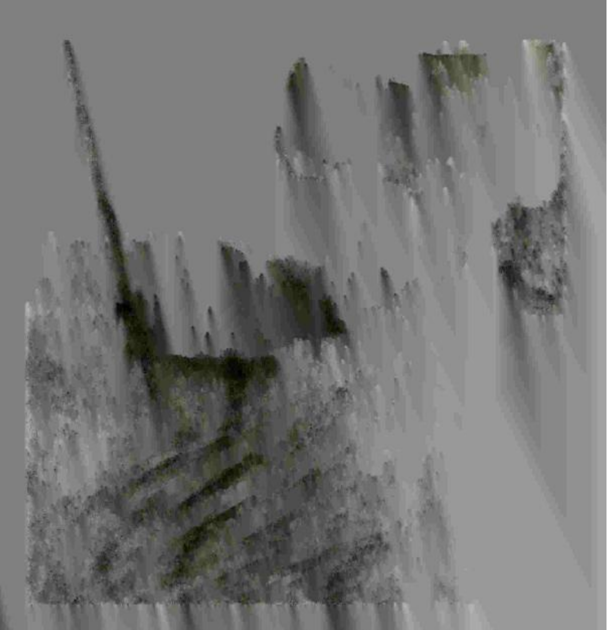
[illegible] is the collision of the sexual revolution and social [illegible] in the process of suppression triggered by the aesthetic [illegible] itself. [illegible] In [illegible] Klimt shows the conflict between the artist and society as [illegible]. This can be seen clearly in the [illegible]. The weakness of the painting lies in Klimt's attack on a [illegible] institution by showing the fate of an individual. The [illegible] from public ethics to private [illegible].

The most vehement and indeed polemical criticism of Klimt's



[illegible] sketch for *Jurisprudence*, [illegible]
[illegible]
Private collection, Austria



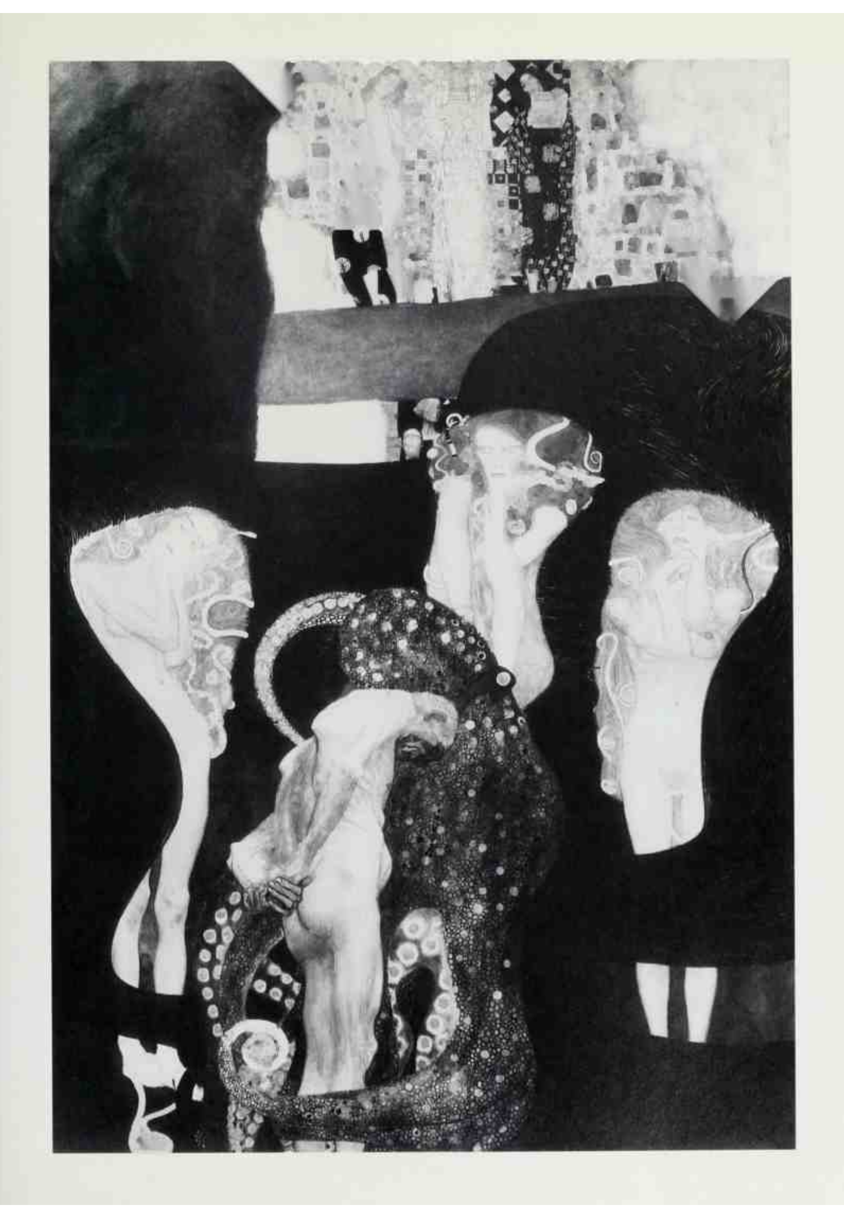


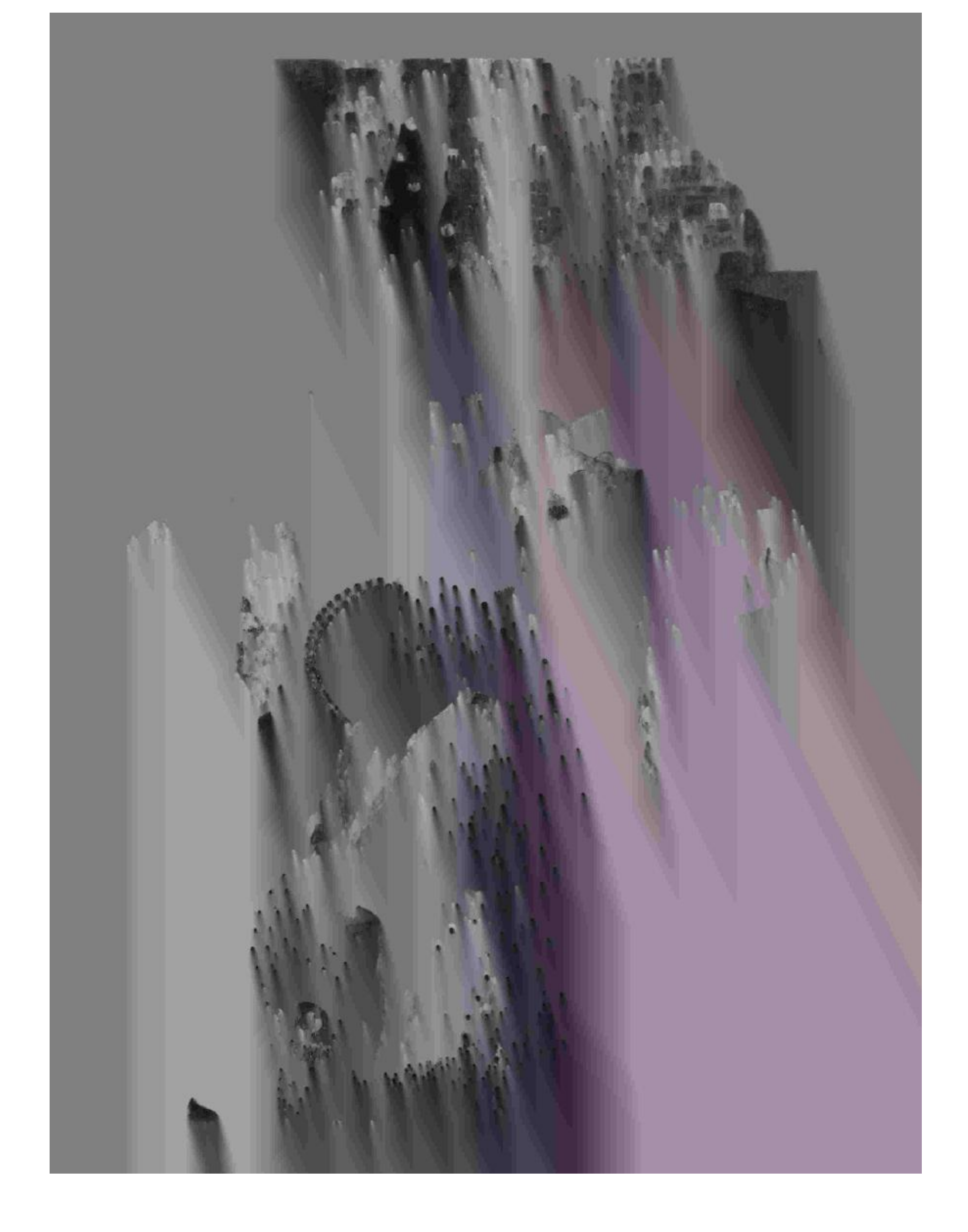
as the [illegible] conscience of the [illegible] – such as Kraus, Loos and [illegible] – [illegible] to support the alliance between truth and beauty. [illegible]

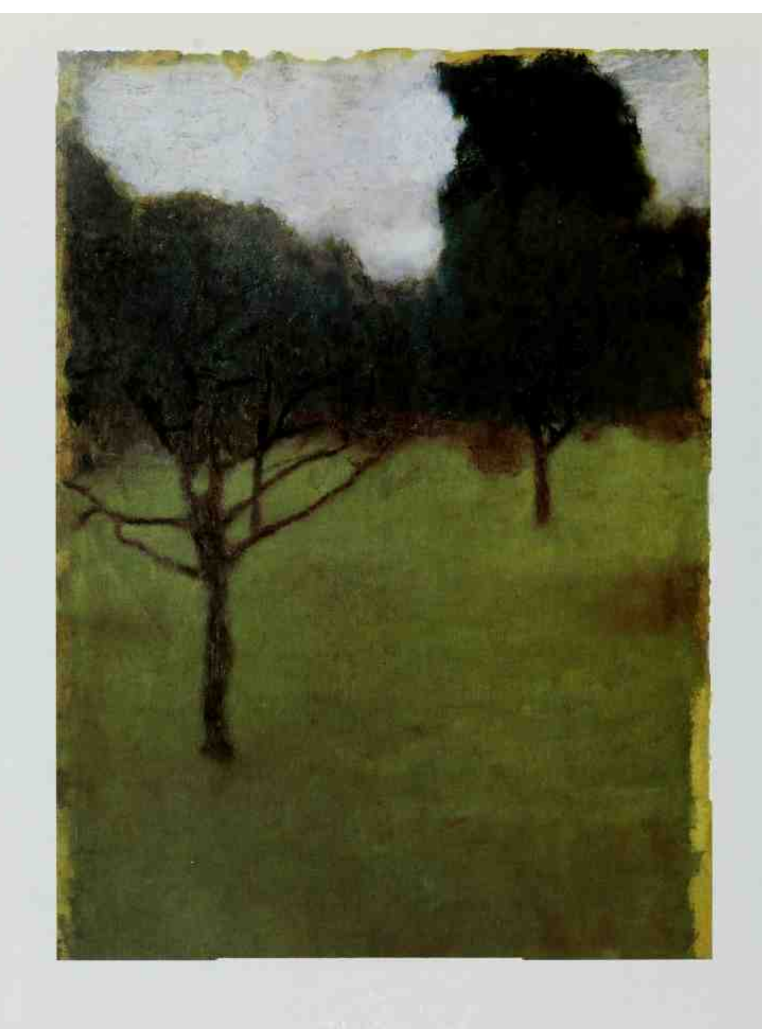
Klimt was not permitted to show *Jurisprudence* at the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis. When an attempt was made to prevent him from exhibiting his two paintings *Hope* and [illegible] (190[illegible]), Klimt was [illegible] to [illegible] his [illegible] by [illegible] the [illegible]. Klimt [illegible] to annul his contract for the Faculty Paintings and repay [illegible] the [illegible] he had already received. "All this [illegible], which has taken years and years, is not fully completed," he wrote in a widely publicised letter to the Ministry of Education. "I shall [illegible] of [illegible] my [illegible], which I find totally unpalatable as long as I am working under the present conditions of state patronage." And in an interview on the same subject Klimt questioned the entire [illegible] practice of state sponsorship of the arts, a practice which had, he thought, given the Secession its edge in the public sphere. "Enough of censorship. I'm going to help myself now. I want to break free. I want to get out of all these unpleasant [illegible] holding up my work and regain my freedom. I reject all state support, I don't want any of it ... Above all, I want to take a stand against the way in which art is treated in the Austrian state and at the Ministry of Education. Whenever there's an opportunity, genuine art and genuine artists are under attack. The only thing that's ever protected is feebleness and falsehood. A lot of things have happened to serious artists which I don't wish to comment on now, but I will some time. After this I shall speak out for them and clarify a few points. A clean break is called for. The state should not seek to exercise the role of [illegible] over exhibitions and artistic statements; it should confine its role to that of mediation and commercial agent and should leave the artistic initiative entirely to the artists themselves. ..."

Klimt paid the advance commission back to the state, and the three [illegible] were acquired by Koloman Moser and Erich Lederer. They were eventually acquired by the Austrian Gallery. Later, under Nazi rule, Klimt's *Philosophy* and *Jurisprudence* were "[illegible]", i.e. forcibly removed from their Jewish owners and made state property. In May 1945, all three paintings were destroyed at Schloss Immendorf, Lower Austria, when retreating SS troops burned down the [illegible].

Jurisprudence, final version, 1907
Jurisprudenz
Oil on canvas, 430 x 300 cm
Destroyed by fire at Schloss Immendorf Palace in 1945

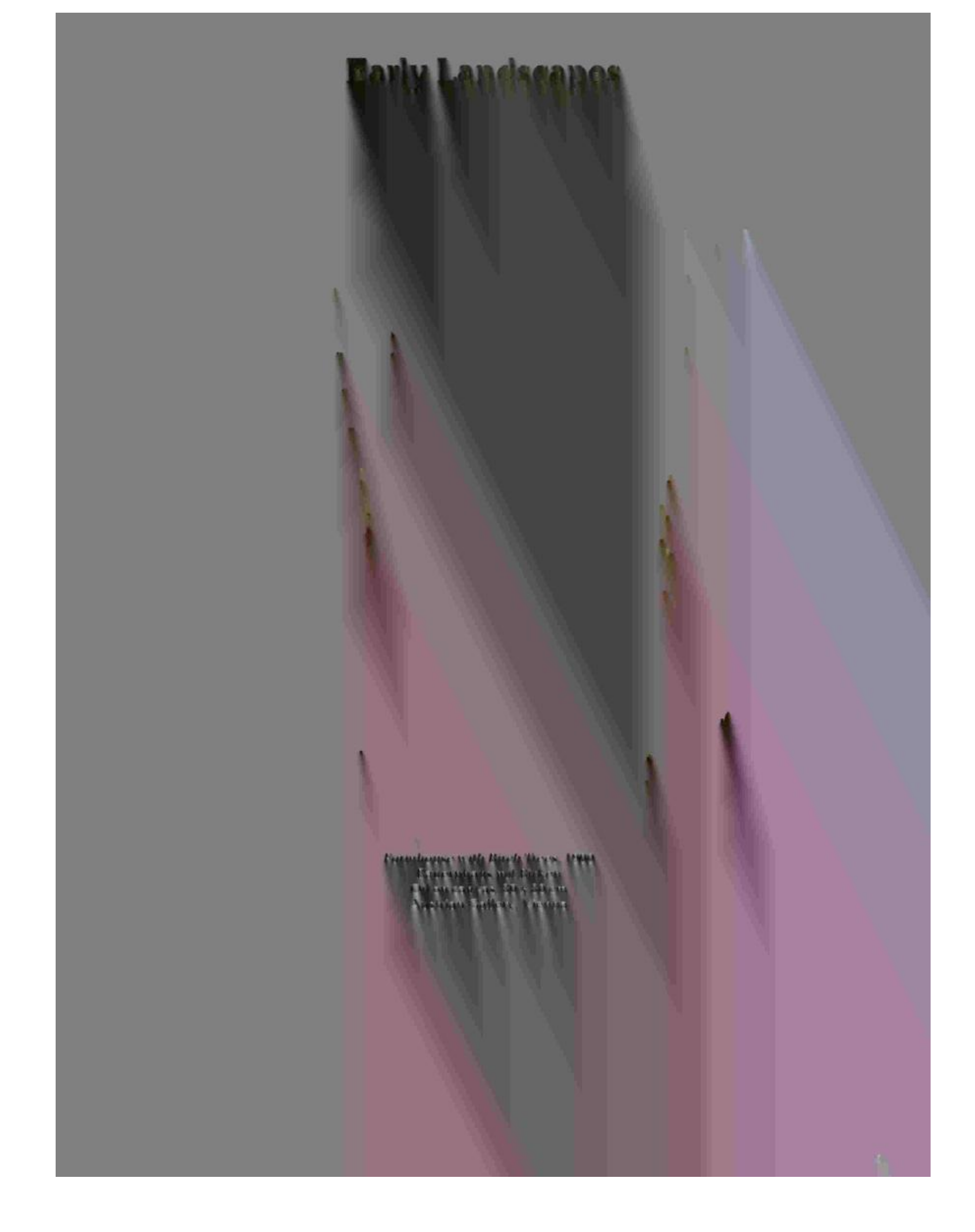


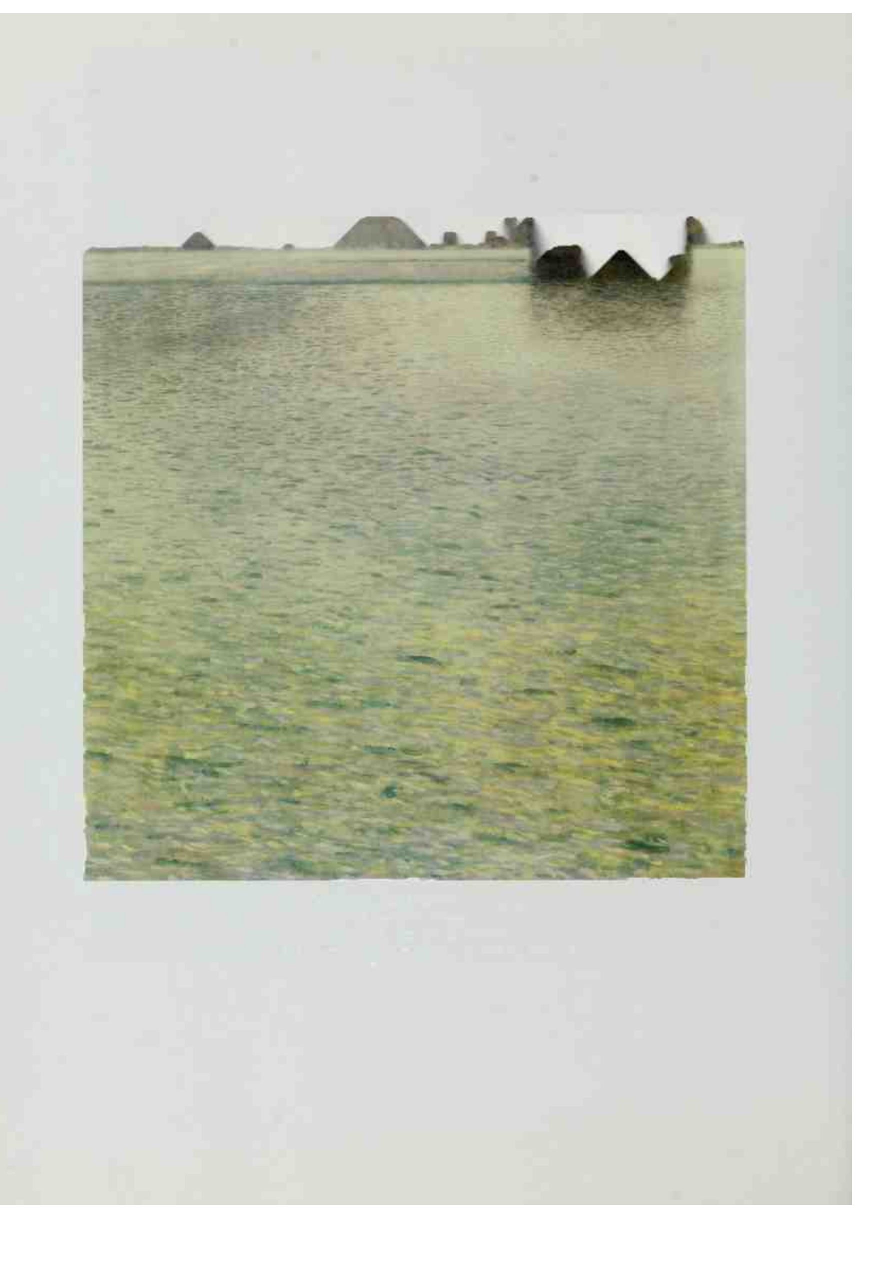


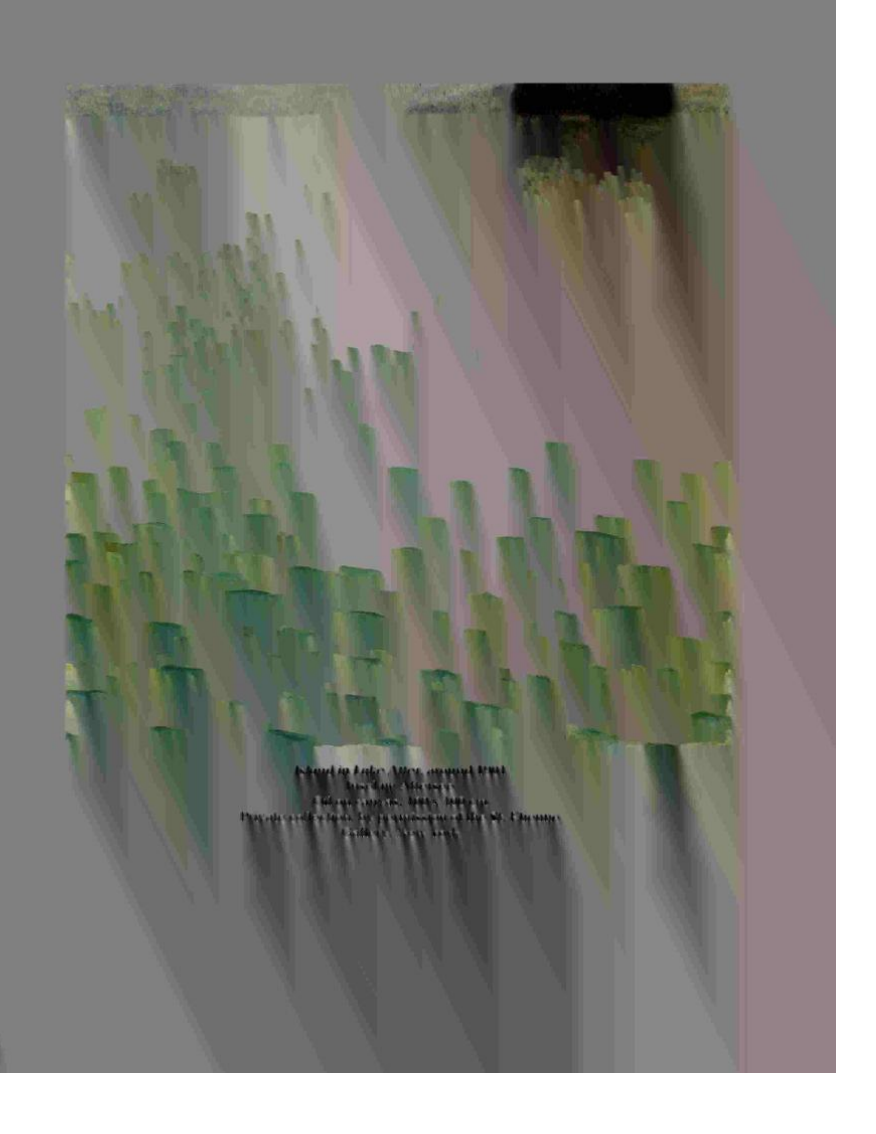




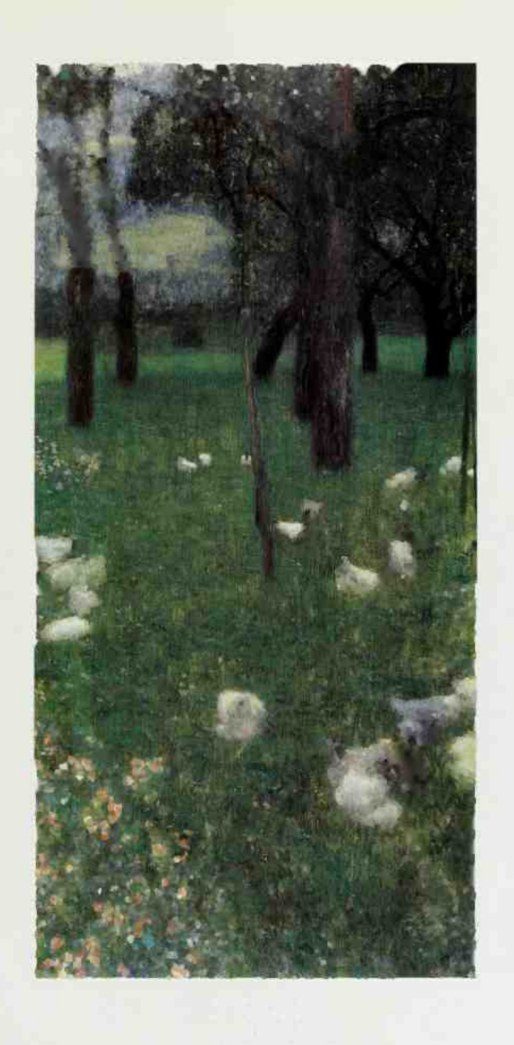


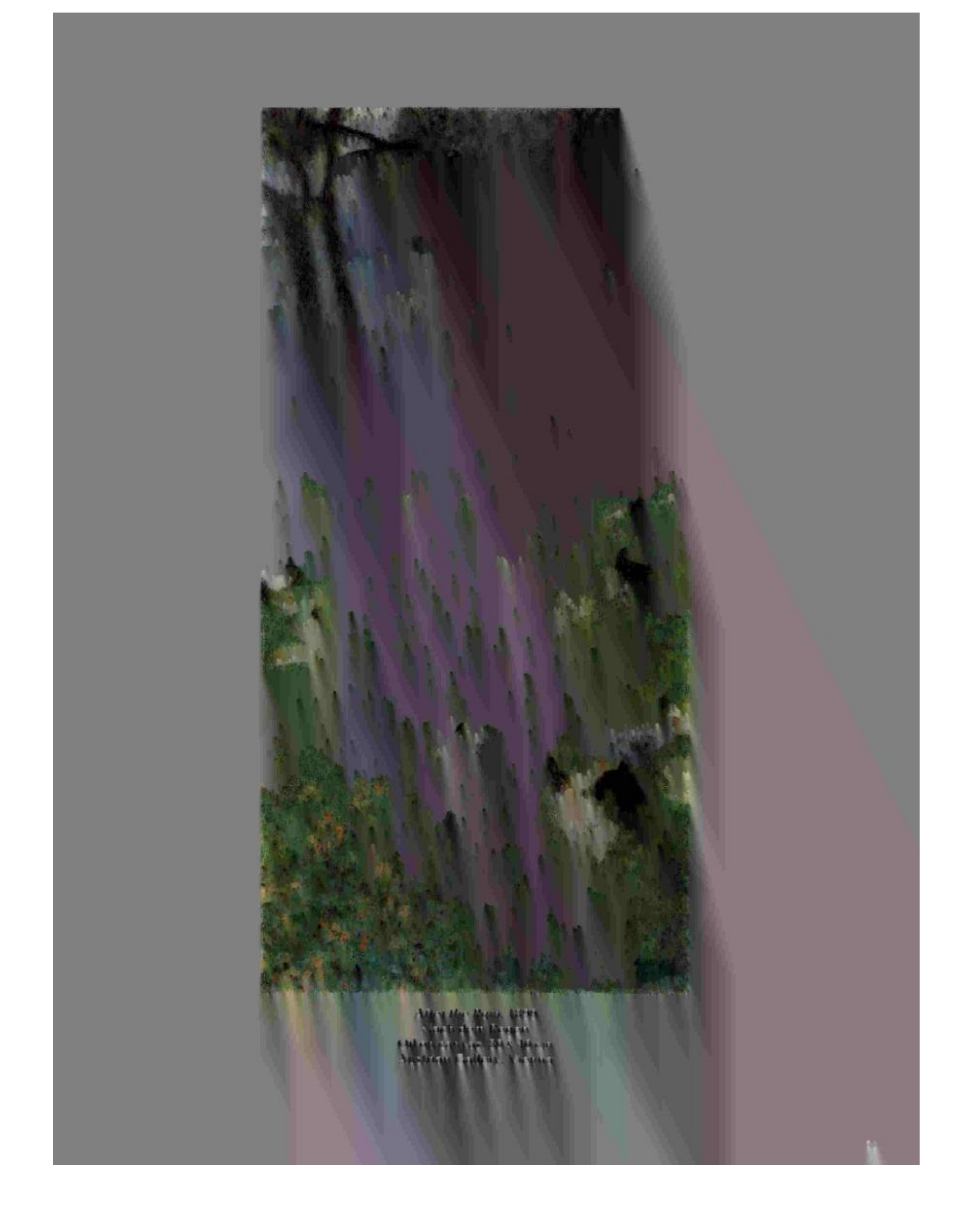

Early Landscapes



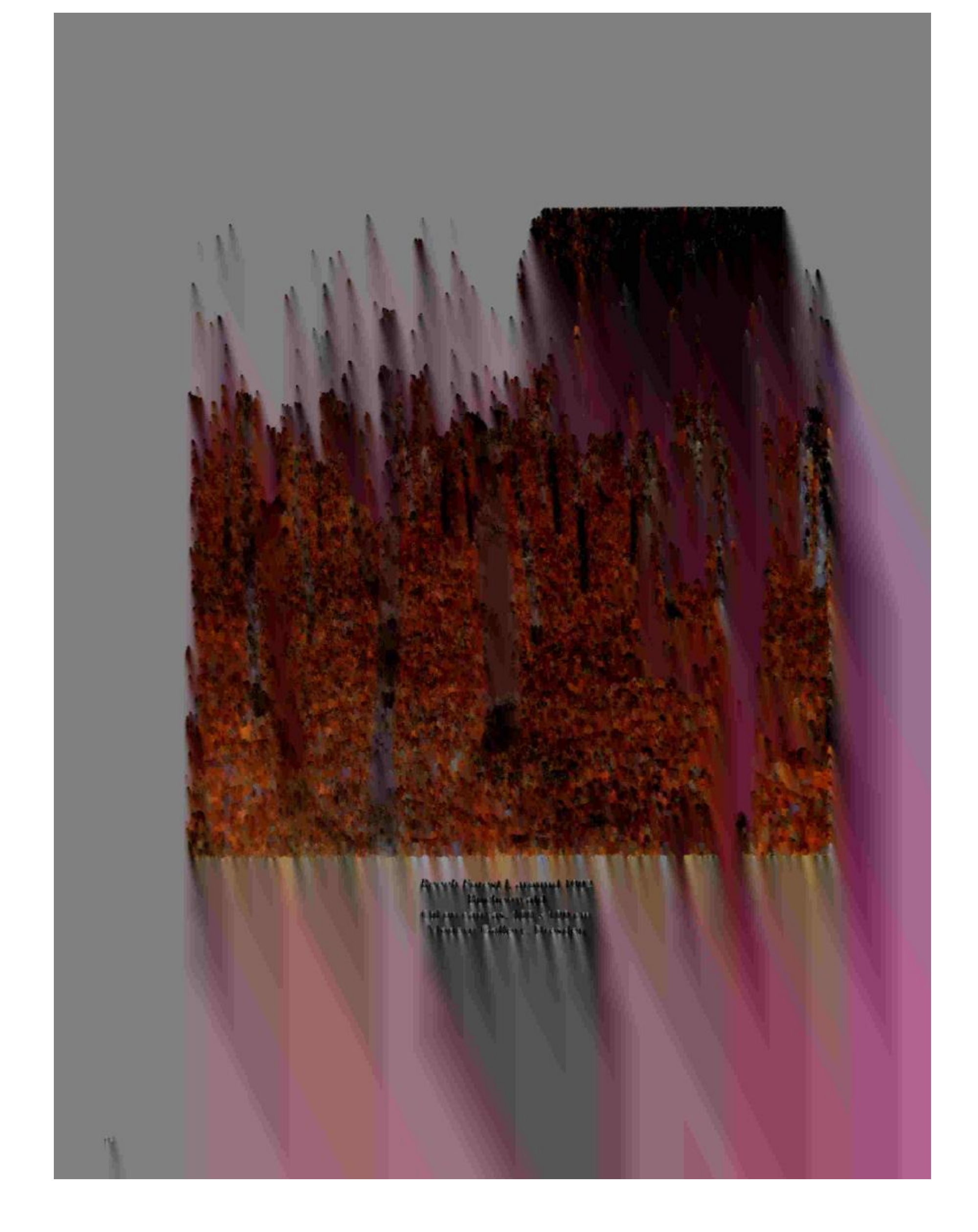


Island in Lake Atter, around 1901
Insel im Attersee
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
Reproduced by permission of the St. Etienne
Gallery, New York

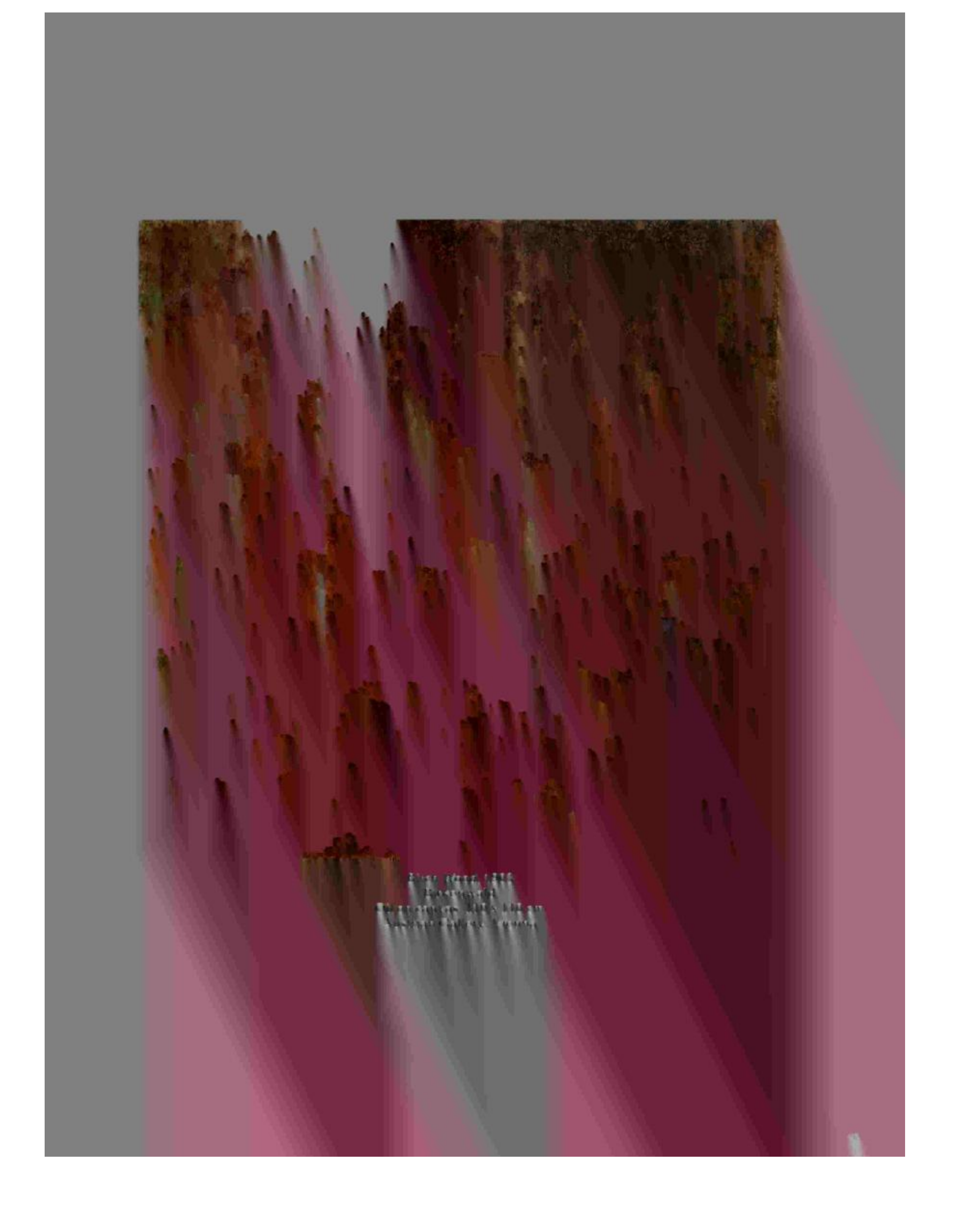


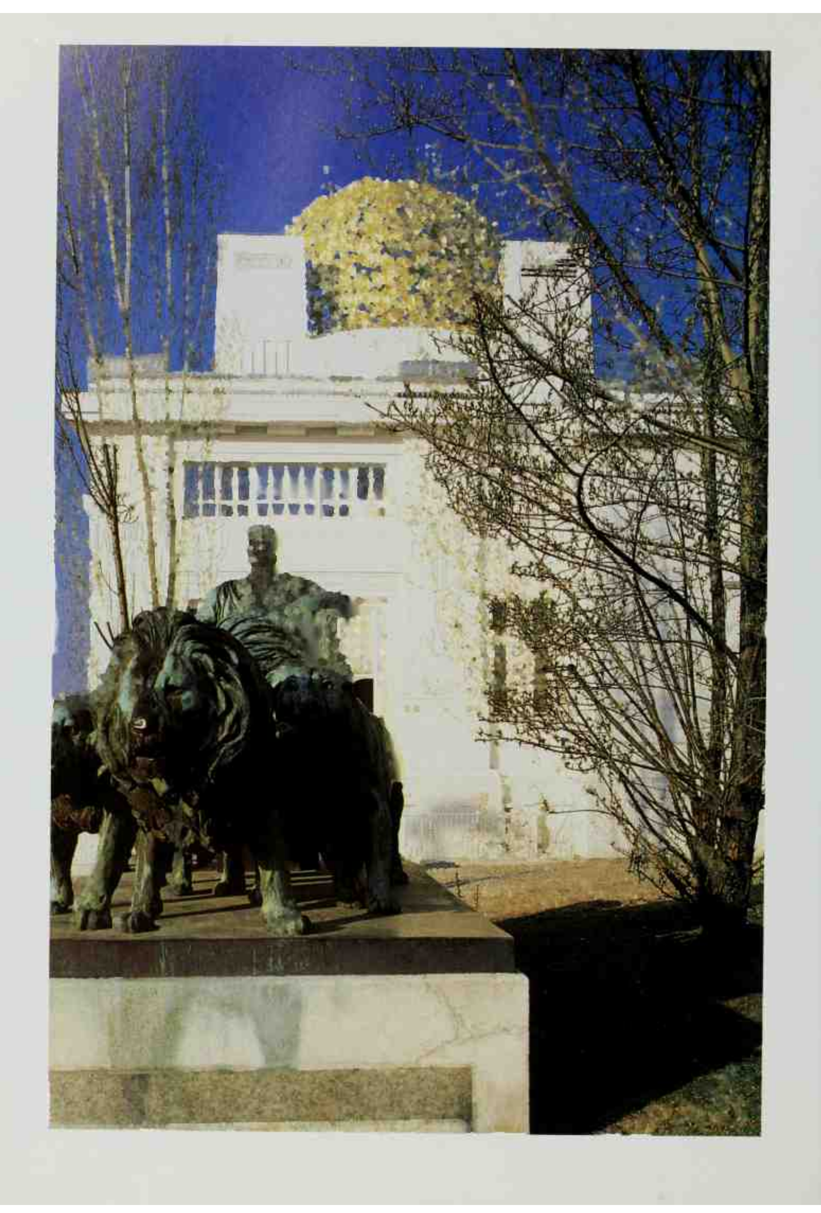


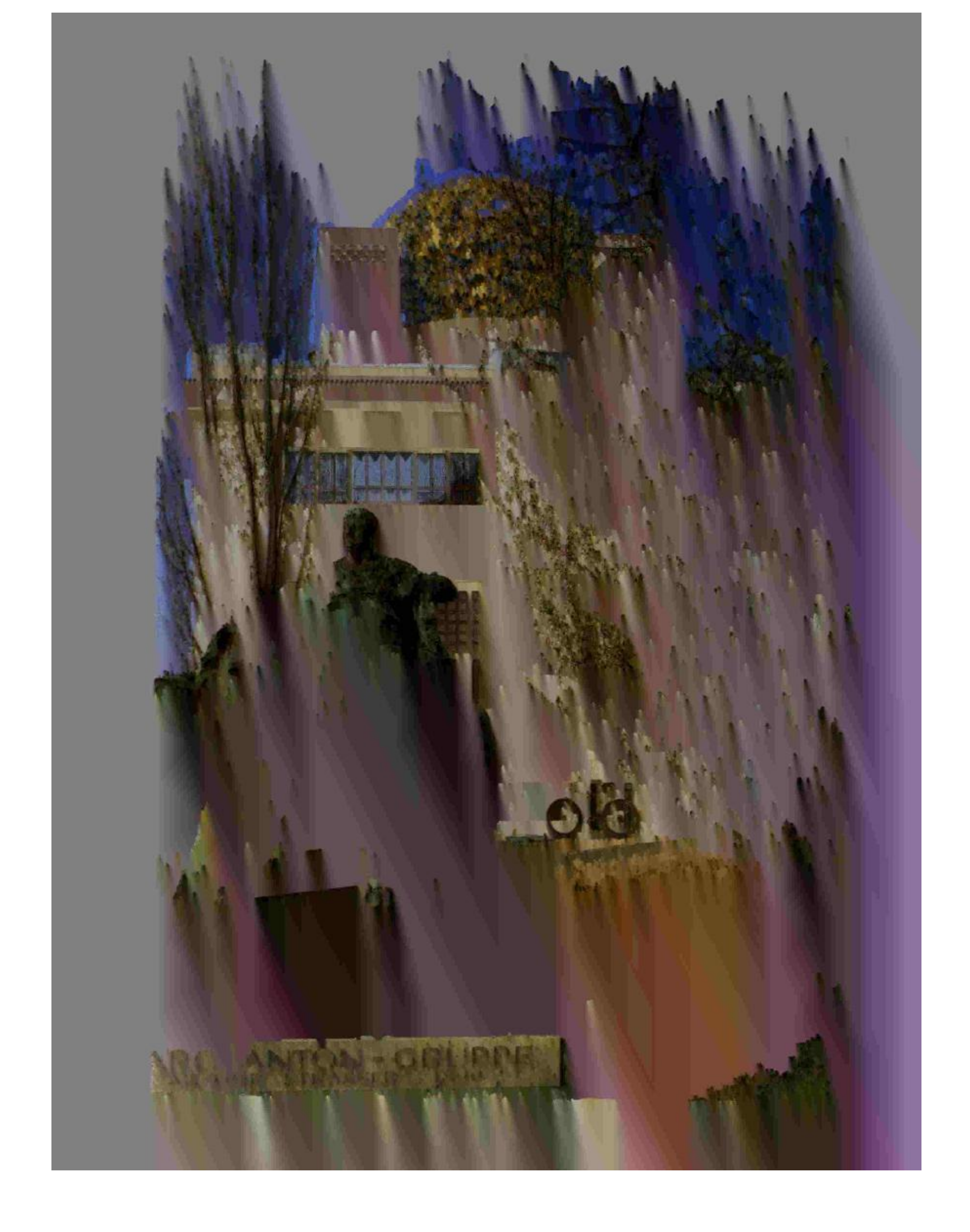














The Secession Building and its Exhibitions

The 14th Exhibition of the Viennese Secession in 1902 is still regarded as a climax in the history of the association. The twenty-one participating artists were all guided by a common idea, that of paying homage to art. The interior design of the exhibition rooms was by Josef Hoffmann. Together with special items – such as Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* (figs. 100 f.) – and the works of art around Max Klinger's Beethoven sculpture, they formed a work of art in itself.

The Secession exhibitions – and this one in particular – marked an important turning point in the history of exhibitions. For the first time, works of art were no longer arranged according to artists or subjects. Instead, they added up to an overall work of art in which each element constituted part of an overriding idea and aesthetic context. The interior design furnished a fitting backdrop for the works on display, underlining the overall idea and establishing connections which enabled the viewer to understand the message of each individual work. This made the Secession exhibitions forerunners of today's fashionable mise-en-scène exhibitions.

However, these exhibitions had yet another aim which was, in a way, diametrically opposed to the overall idea: step by step, a neutral setting was developed which carefully ensured that each work of art with its unmistakable qualities came into its own. To a large extent, this eventually resulted in a neutral space, a "white cell" (Brian O'Doherty) – the gallery and museum space of today – which emphatically reinforces the autonomy of art and seems to state that it should not seek to be anything but art. The dilemma of a setting which individualized the different works was already recognized in the Secession exhibitions: the overriding idea and the decorative setting of the interior design were meant to prevent the disintegration of exhibitions into collections of radically individualized works of art. And indeed it was only through such a so-called Gesamtkunstwerk with its overall impact that the Secessionist ideal of art as a social force could be put into practice.

The Secession Building, incidentally, was designed as a kind of neutral framework which could be adapted to circumstances, thus revolutionizing the whole idea of exhibitions. For example, it used sliding walls which added considerable flexibility.

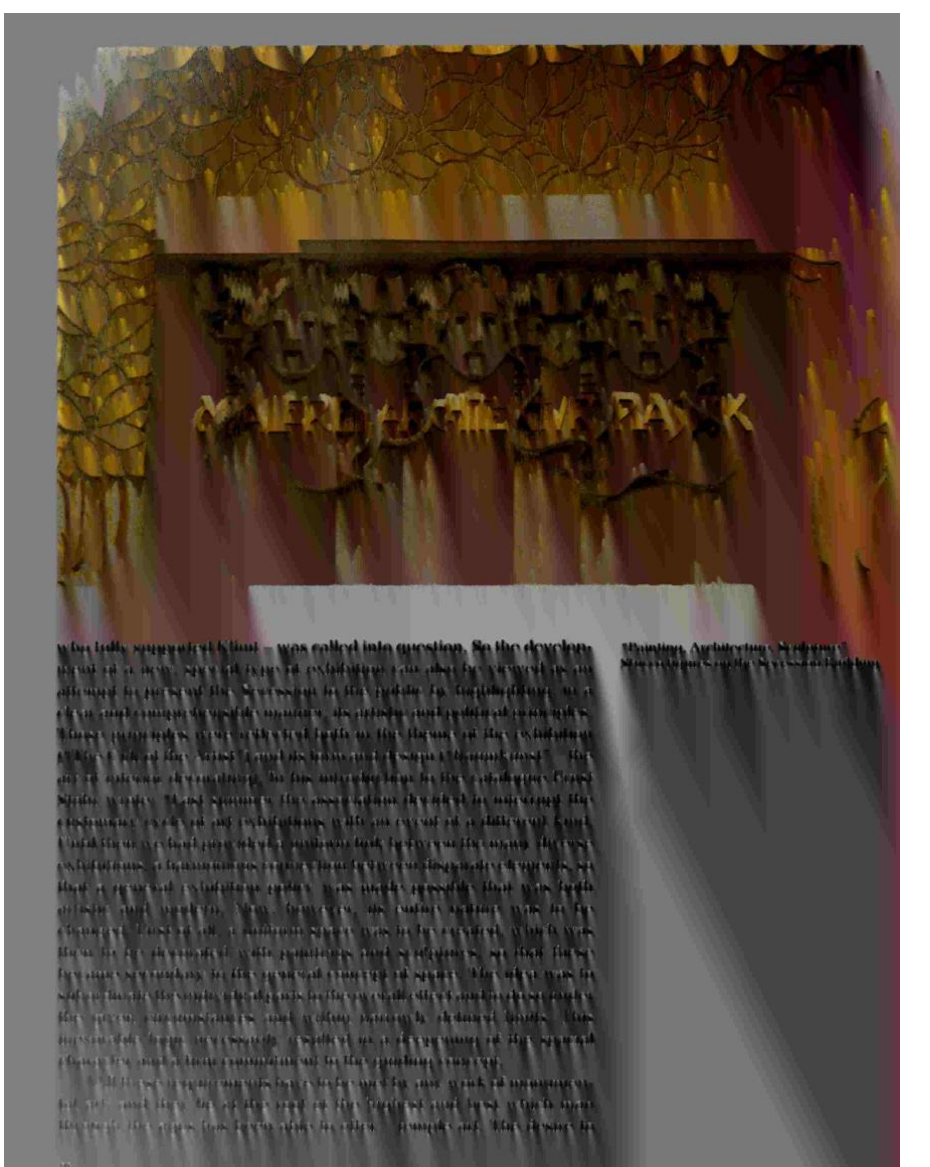
A year after Klimt's *Medicine* had been presented to the public, the scandal was still fresh in everybody's minds, and the controversy over his *Faculty Paintings* meant that the position of the entire Secession



The Vienna Secession Building
designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich
1897–1898
Front view

The Vienna Secession Building
designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich
1897–1898
Side view



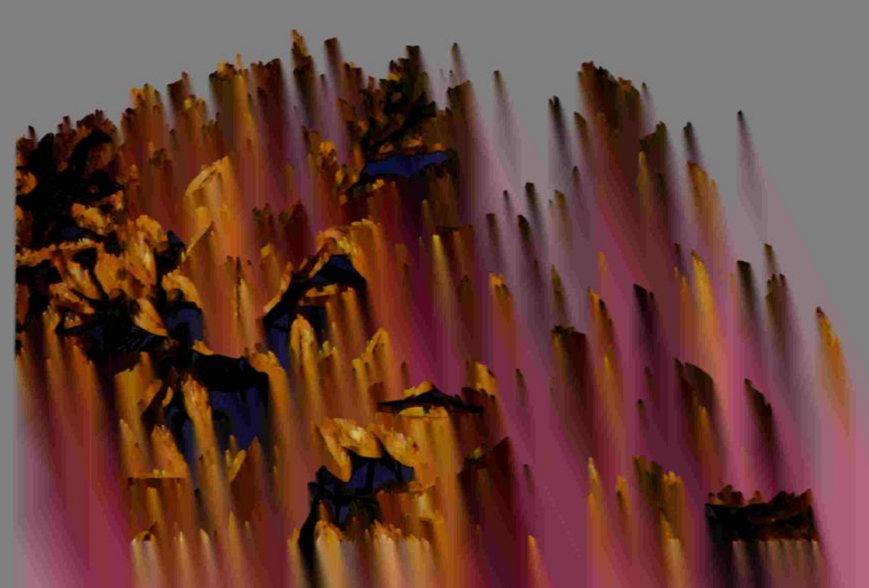


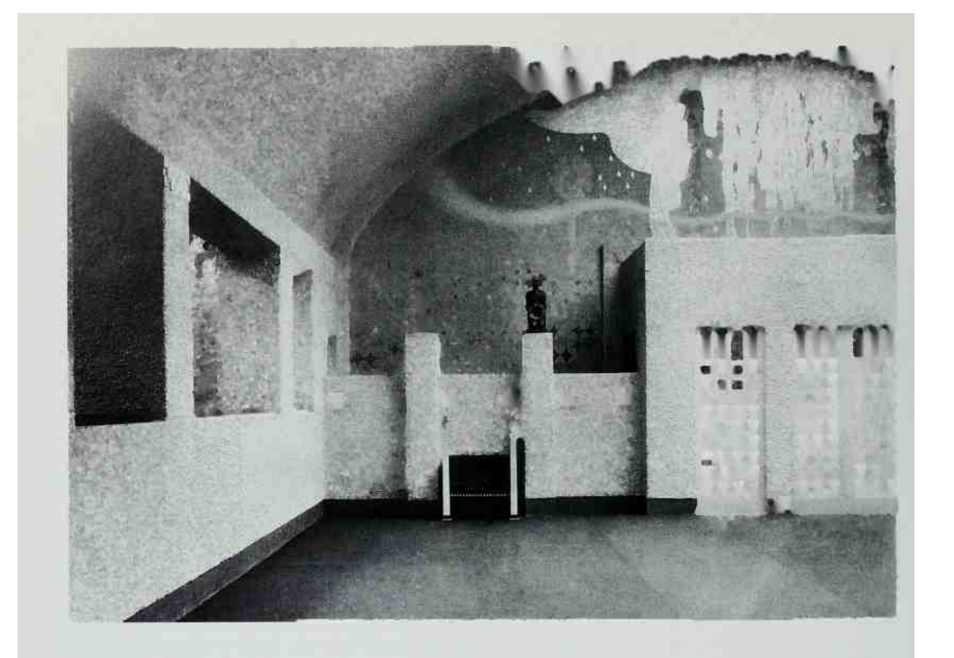
who fully supported Klimt – was called into question. So the development of a new, special type of exhibition can also be viewed as an attempt to present the Secession to the public by highlighting, in a clear and comprehensible manner, its artistic and political principles. These principles were reflected both in the theme of the exhibition ("The Cult of the Artist") and its form and design ("Raumkunst" – the art of interior decorating). In his introduction to the catalogue Ernst Stöhr wrote: "Last summer the association decided to interrupt the customary cycle of art exhibitions with an event of a different kind. Until then we had provided a uniform link between the many diverse exhibitions, a harmonious connection between disparate elements, so that a general exhibition policy was made possible that was both artistic and modern. Now, however, the entire setting was to be changed. First of all, a uniform space was to be created, which was then to be decorated with paintings and sculptures, so that these became secondary to the general concept of space. The idea was to subordinate the individual objects to the overall effect and to thus realize the given circumstances and within narrowly defined limits. This inevitably then necessarily resulted in a deepening of the spatial character and a firm commitment to the guiding concept.

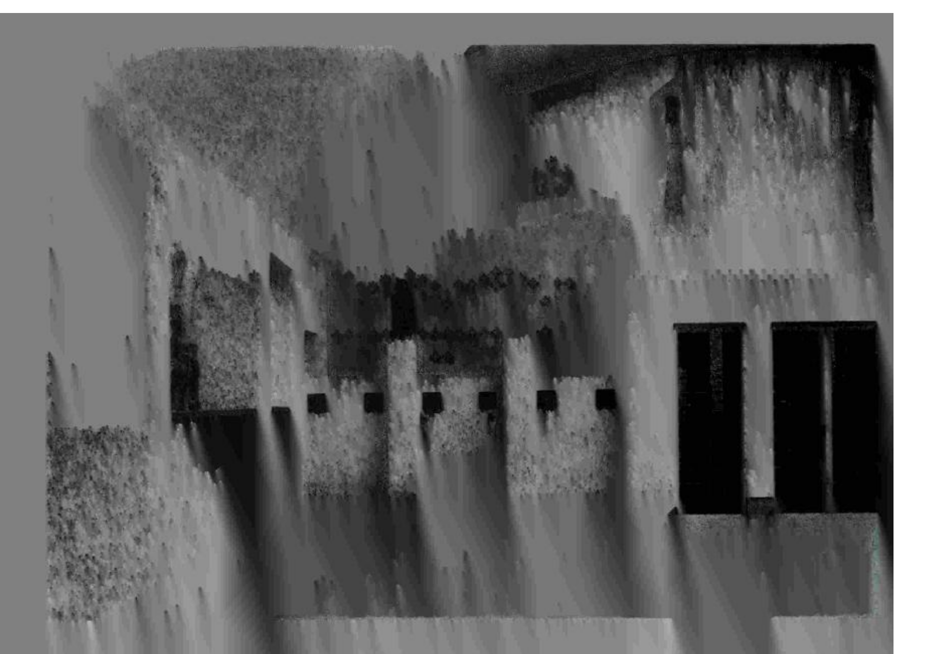
All these requirements have to be met by any work of monumental art, and they lie at the root of the highest and best which man throughout the ages has been able to offer ... example art. The desire to

"Painting, Architecture, Sculpture"
Supraporte of the Secession building







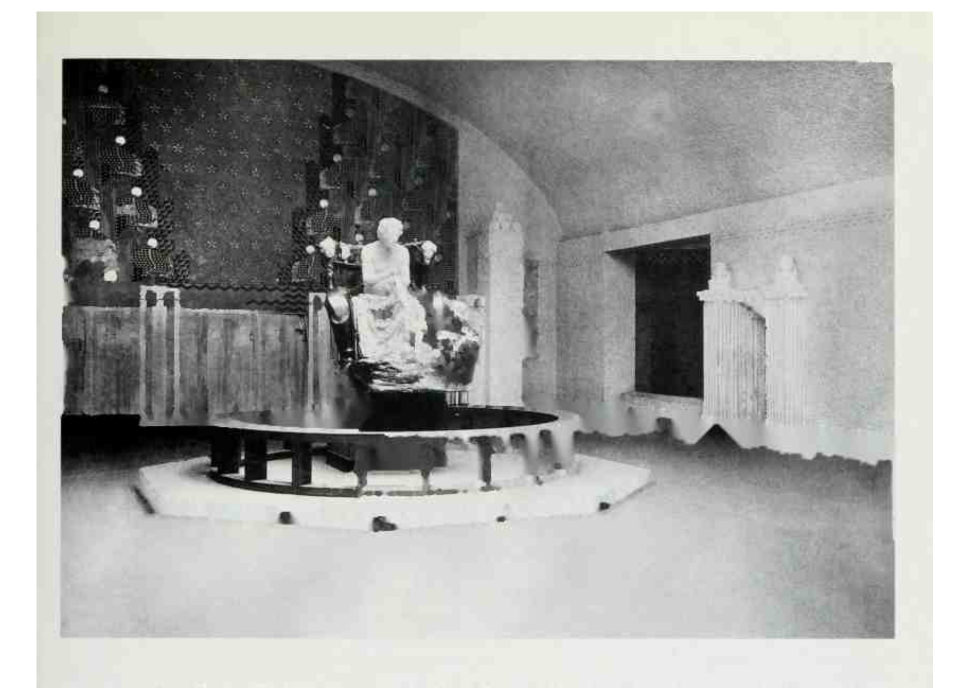


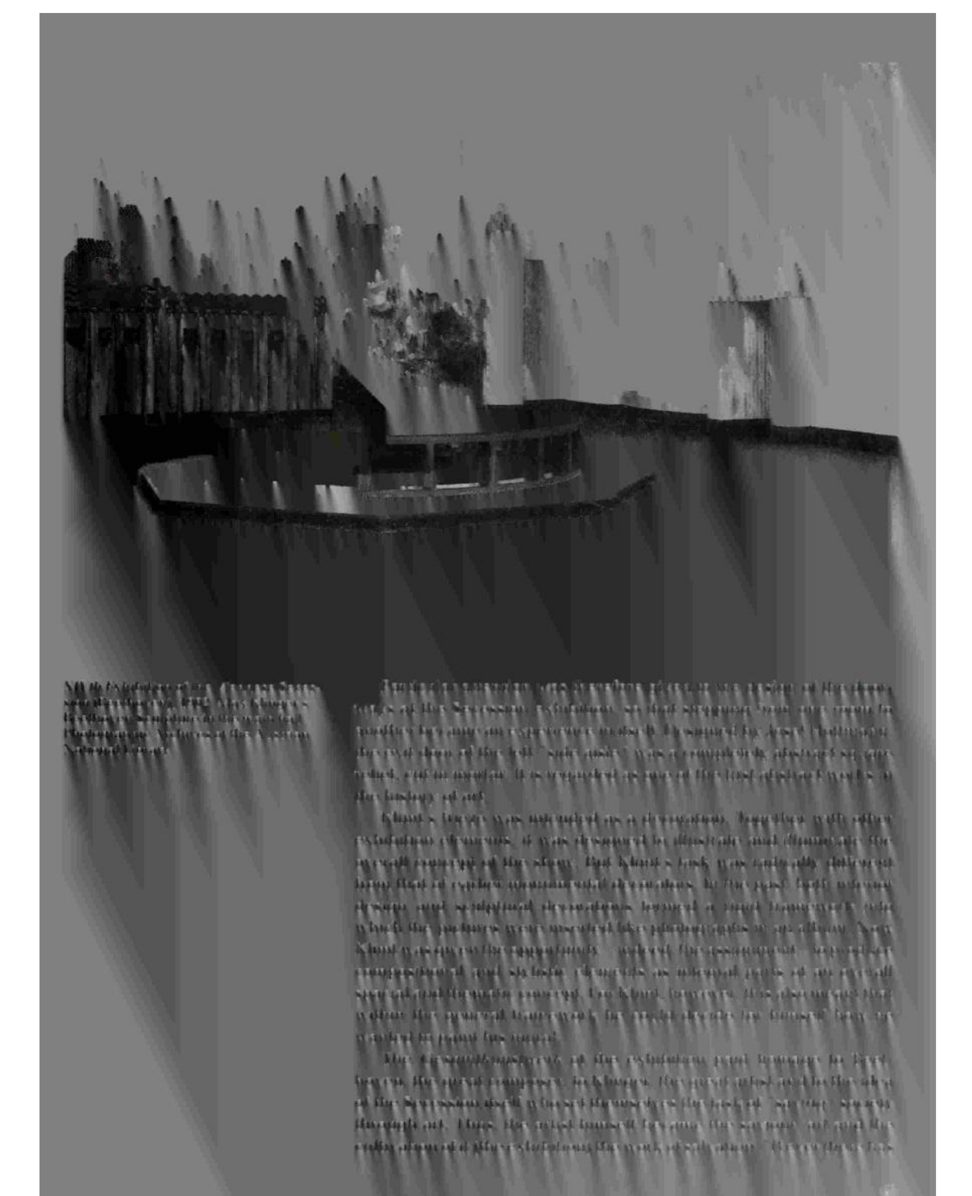
[illegible]

colours and subdued overhead lighting. Then they were guided into the "side aisle" on the left where they were prepared, as it were, for the climax of the exhibition by [illegible]. The central room was accessible from the two side rooms, which were slightly elevated. Thus, the significance of the main work was further enhanced and the overall concept of the exhibition underpinned by [illegible]. Visitors left the exhibition through the right-hand "side aisle", which, as it were, echoed the hallowed atmosphere of the [illegible]

This kind of stage-setting for the aesthetic experience of an exhibition was by no means new. [illegible]

[illegible]





XIVth Exhibition of the Vienna Secession (Beethoven), 1902. Max Klinger's Beethoven Sculpture in the main hall. Photograph: Archives of the Austrian National Library

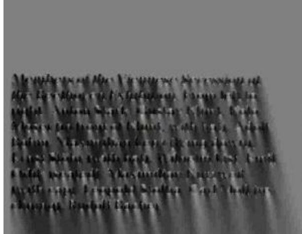
Particular attention was given by the planners to the design of the three rooms of the Secession exhibition, so that stepping from one room to another became an experience in itself. Designed by Josef Hoffmann, the end [illegible] of the left "side aisle" was a completely abstract square relief, cut in mortar. It is regarded as one of the first abstract works in the history of art.

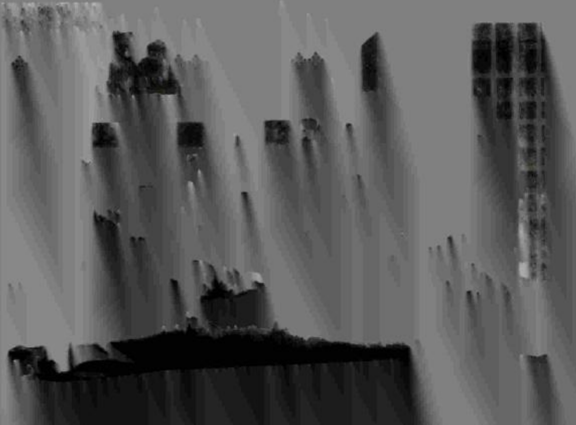
Klimt's frieze was intended as a decoration. Together with other exhibition elements, it was designed to illustrate and illuminate the overall concept of the show. But Klimt's task was radically different from that of earlier monumental decorations. In the past, both interior design and sculptural decorations formed a rigid framework into which the pictures were inserted like photographs in an album. Now Klimt was given the opportunity – indeed the assignment – to produce compositional and stylistic elements as integral parts of an overall spatial and thematic concept. For Klimt, however, this also meant that within the general framework, he could decide for himself how he wanted to paint his mural.

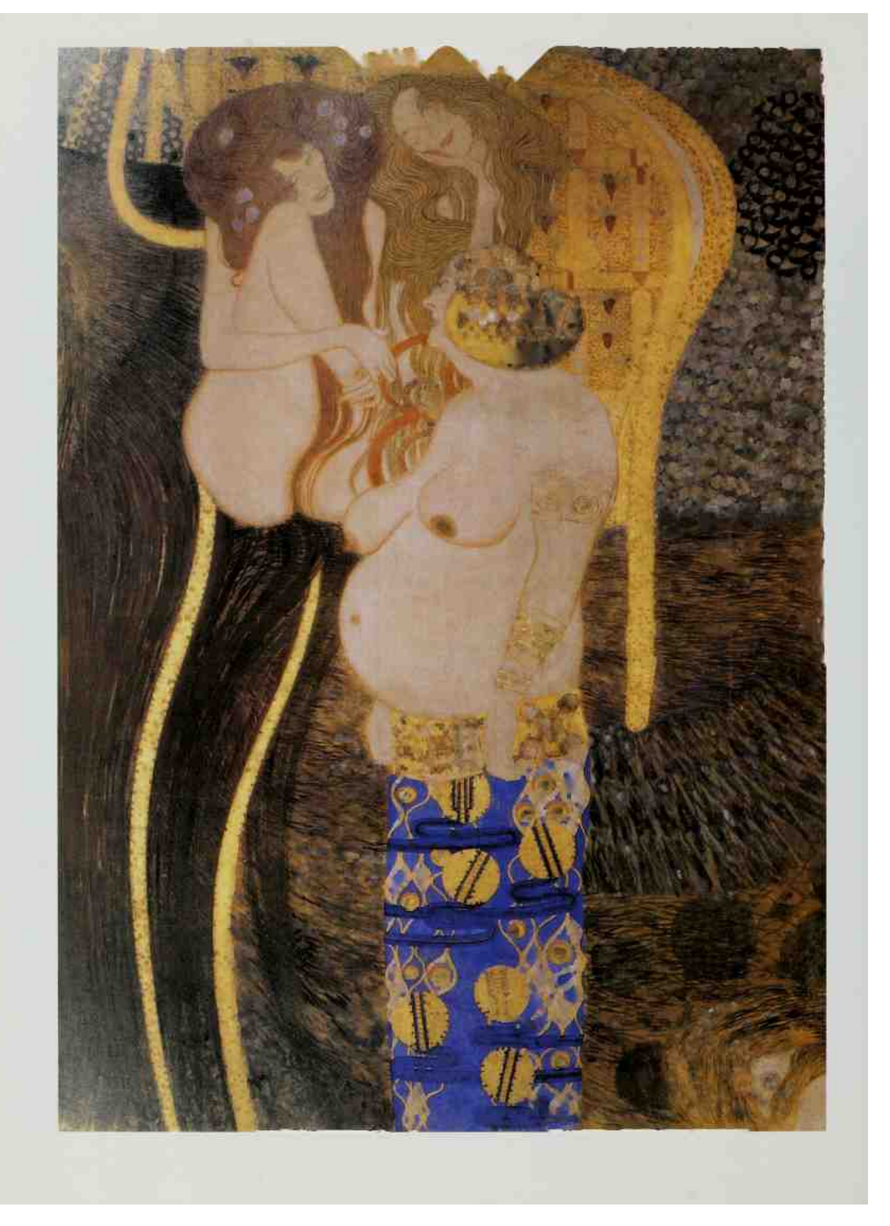
The Gesamtkunstwerk of the exhibition paid homage to Beethoven, the great composer. In Klinger, the great artist, and in the idea of the Secession itself [illegible] themselves the task of "saving" society through art. Thus, the artist himself became the saviour, and art and the [illegible] the work of salvation." [illegible]

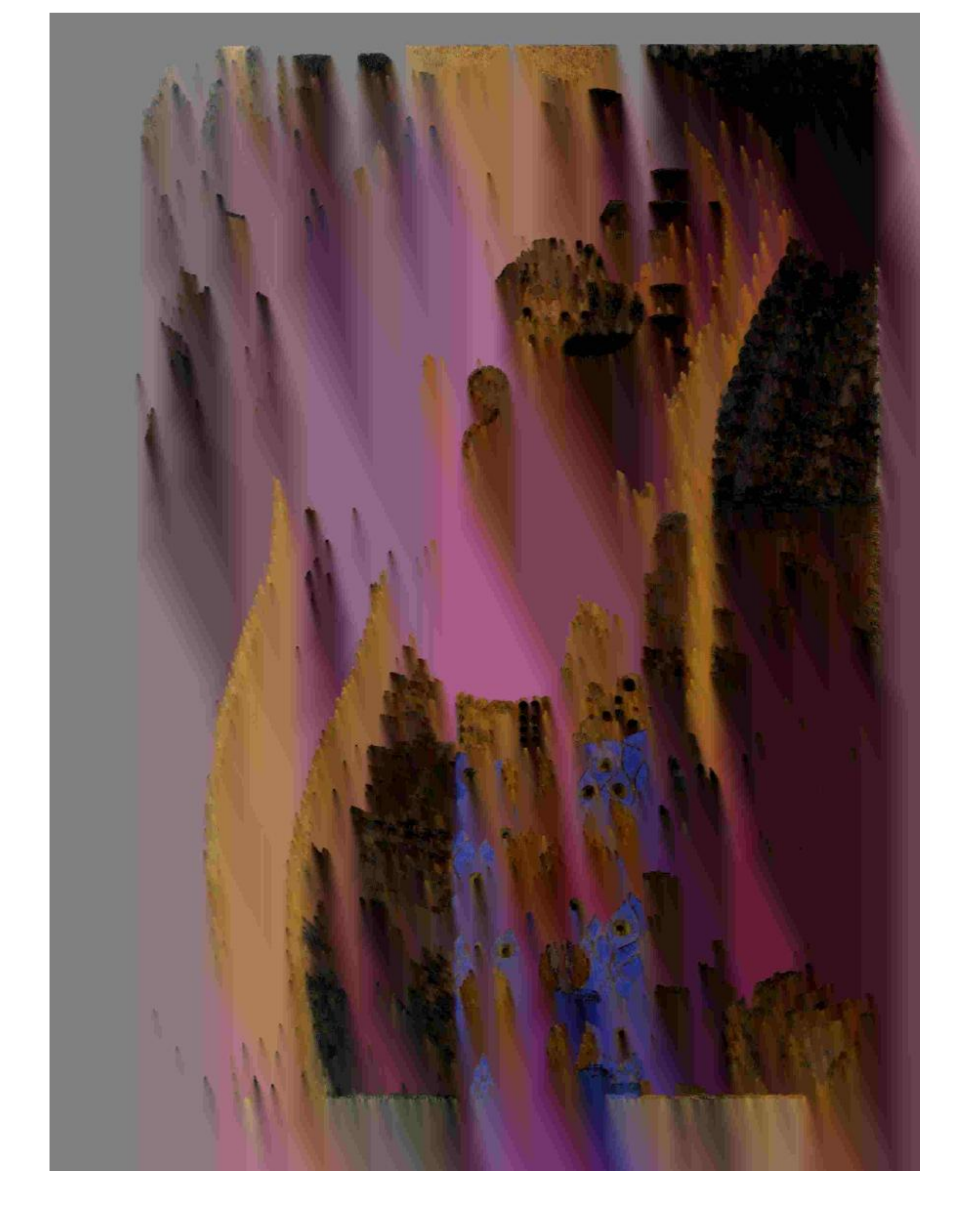


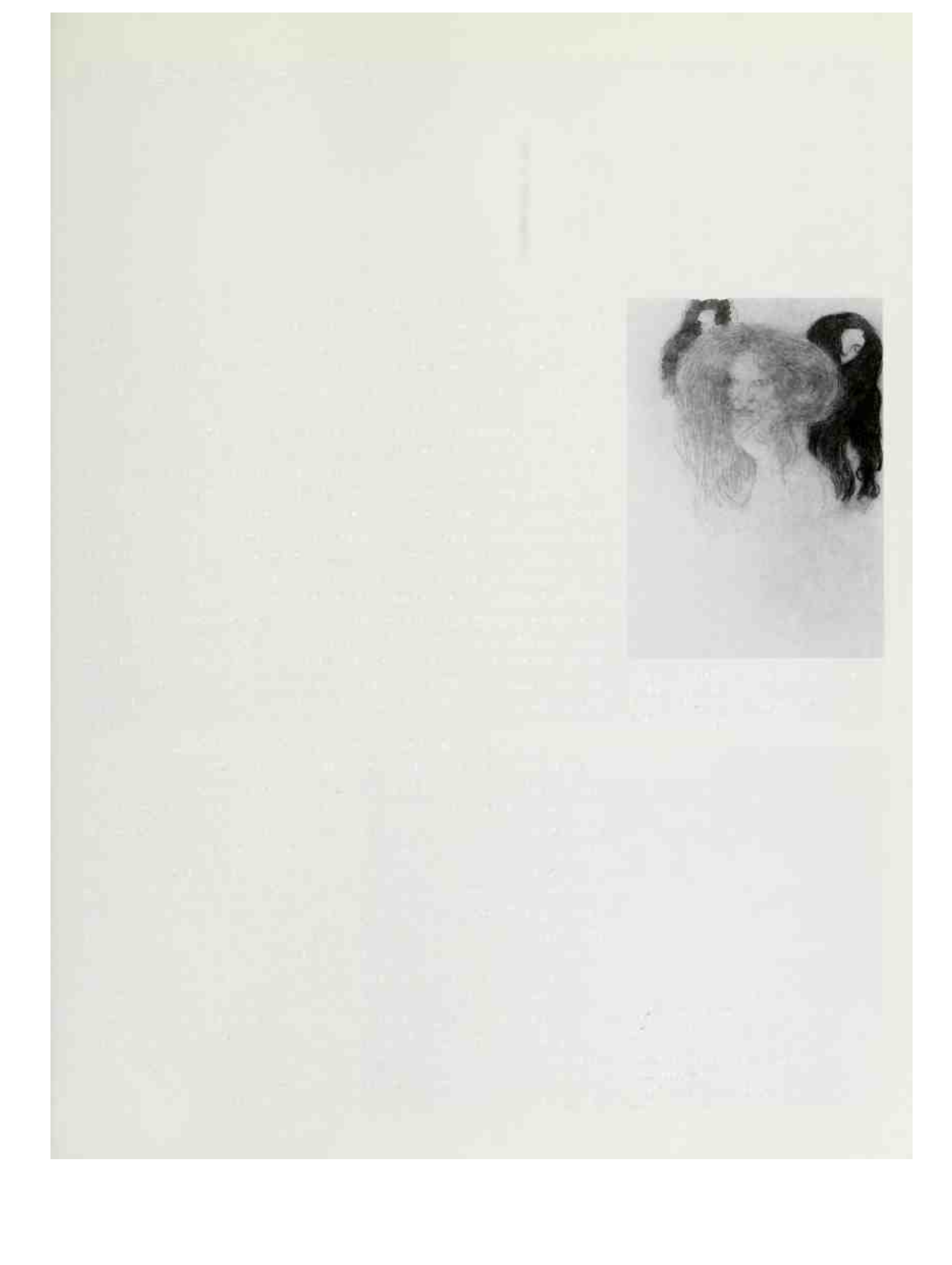












The Beethoven Frieze

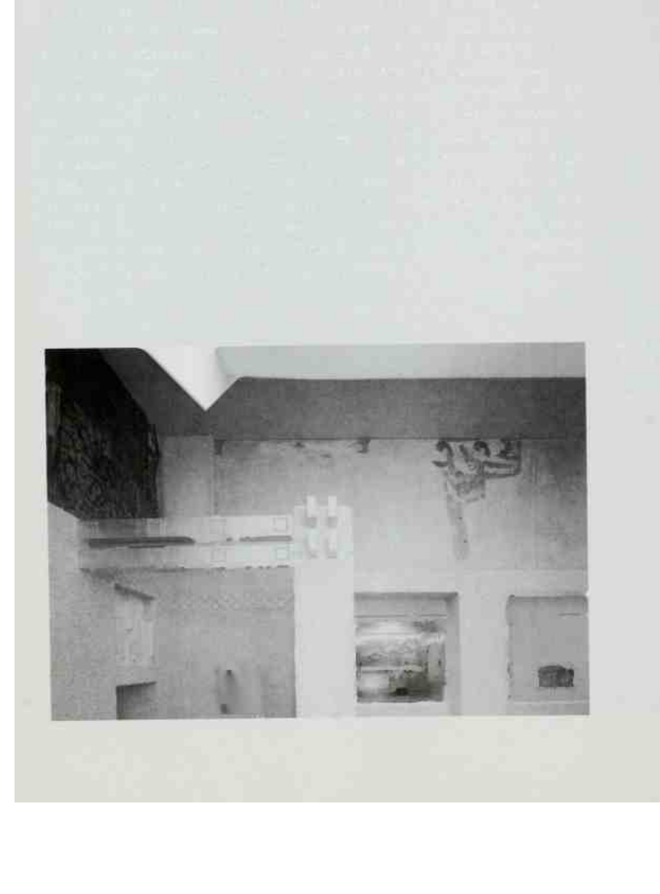
Originally it was planned that Klimt's frieze should be removed after the exhibition. For this reason, only the cheapest material was used (which was to lead to great problems in restoring the frieze). Klimt had painted it on a plastered wooden lattice, held in place with reeds. To achieve certain effects, he used – among other things – tin tacks, fragments of mirrors, buttons and costume jewellery made of coloured cut glass. Nevertheless, the frieze outlived all the other works of art in the exhibition. Indeed, it has become the principal permanent reminder of the most famous of all Secession exhibitions. In 1973 the frieze was bought by the Austrian state, whereupon it was restored in a long, painstaking process. At the same time an exact copy was made for exhibition purposes, which was shown to the public for the first time in Vienna in 1986, at an exhibition called *Vienna 1870–1930: Dream and Reality*. Thus the *Beethoven Frieze* was promoted to the rank of a monumental work of art and indeed a major work of Austrian art [illegible] at the turn of the century. The frieze had always been regarded as a key to Klimt's art, and the fact that it had not been accessible for several decades almost gave it a mythical status. Since then it has been restored to the Secession building, though not to its original place. It now hangs in a basement room specially converted for the purpose.

The 1902 exhibition catalogue very clearly shows the connection between the work of the Secession and its underlying philosophy. With a direct reference to the final chorus of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a setting of Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, the central theme of the frieze is the salvation of 'weak mankind' through the mediation of art and love. The frieze starts with a depiction of man's longing for happiness. The sufferings of weak mankind, the supplications of the weak to the strong well-armed man and the inner compassion and ambition which move him to take up the struggle for happiness. The side wall shows the result of the struggle. The longing for happiness finds fulfilment in poetry. The arts lead us into the ideal realm where we alone can find pure joy, pure happiness and pure love. Choirs of the Angels of Paradise. 'Joy, Thou Fairest Spark Divine.' 'A kiss for the Whole World!' Between these elements, along the side walls, there were the Hostile Powers. Typhoeus the Giant, against whom even the gods fought in vain, and his daughters, the three Gorgons. Sickness, Madness and Death. Lust, Lasciviousness, Excess. Gnawing Grief. The yearnings and desires of mankind fly high above them. Suspended



Drawing relating to the middle of the Hostile Powers, 1902.
Black chalk, [illegible]
[illegible]

Beethoven Frieze, 1902.
[illegible]
[illegible]

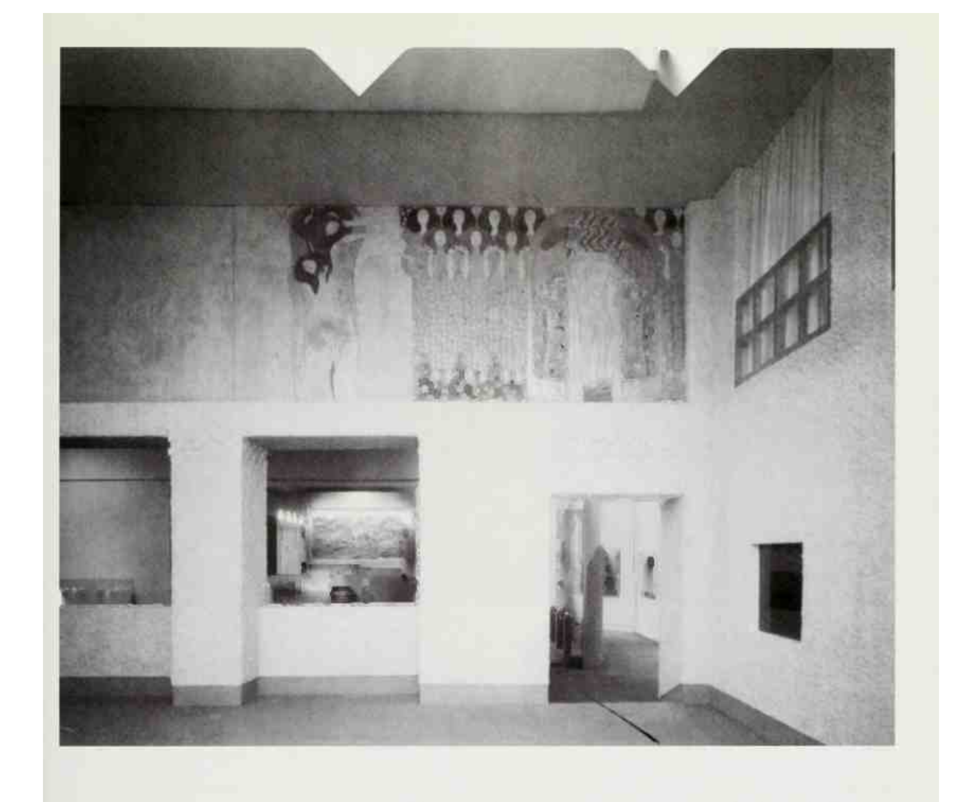


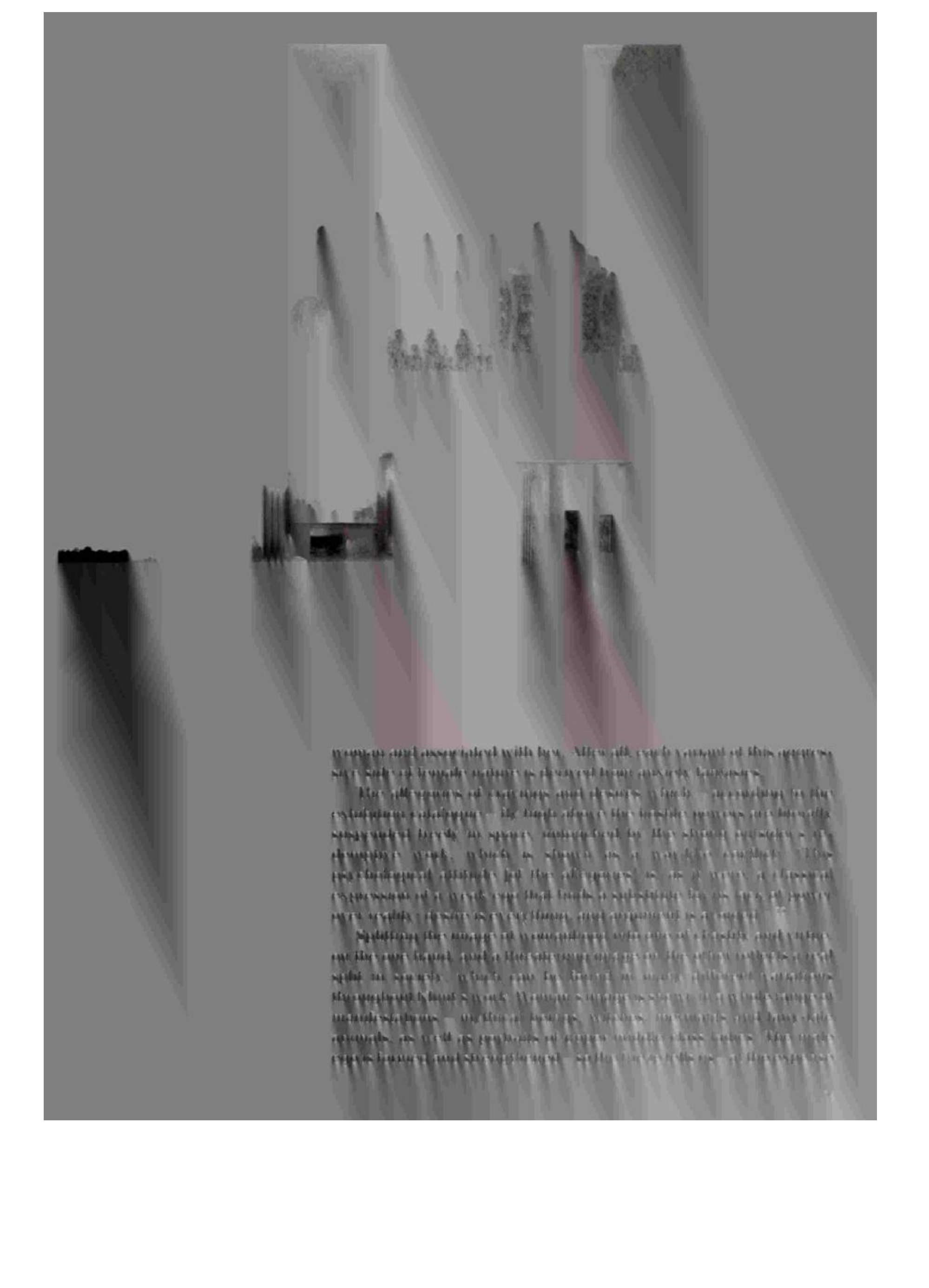
[illegible] on the plaster background which was left almost entirely in its original state, these figures form the transition to the final group.

[illegible]



[illegible] Reconstruction of the Klimt Room [illegible]



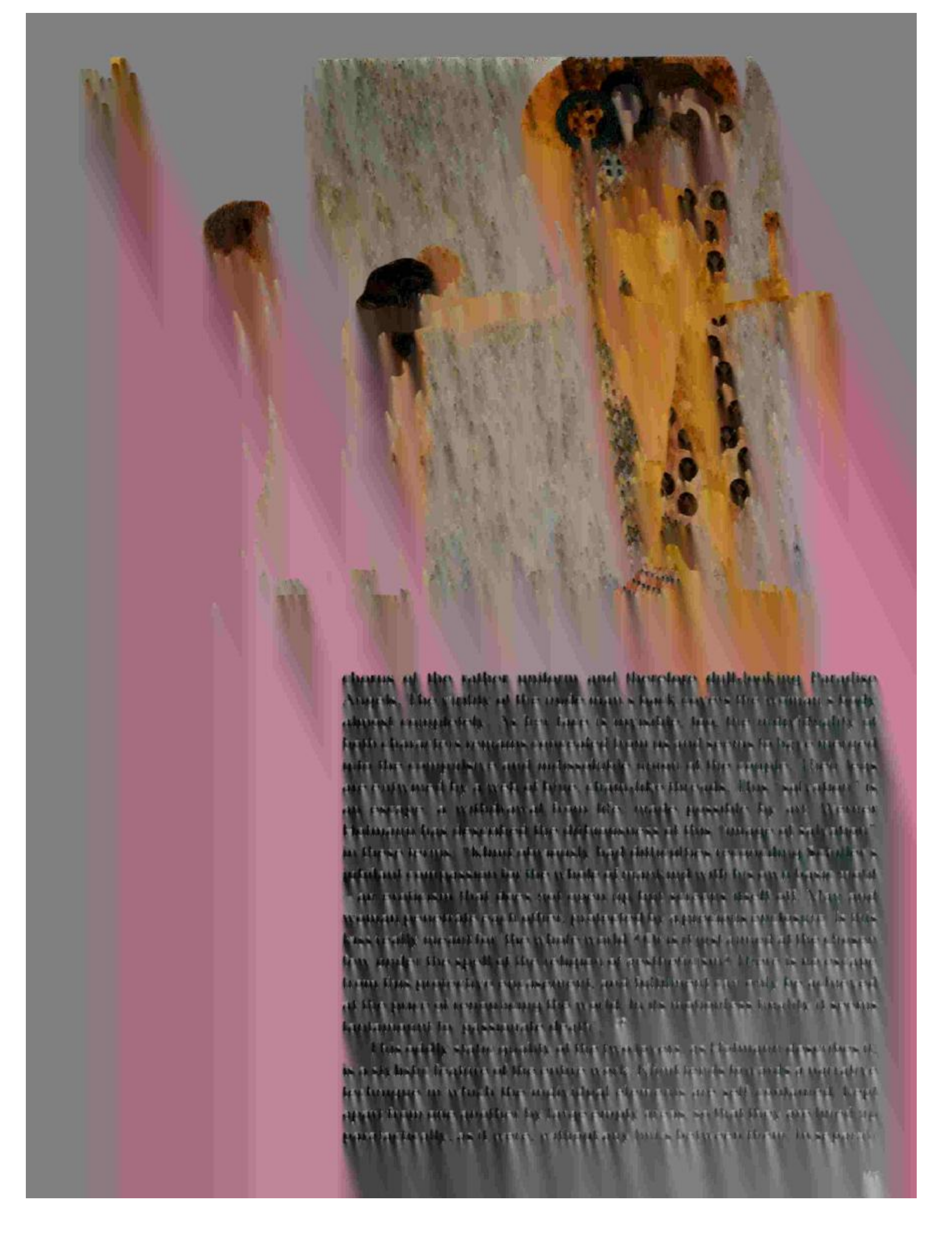


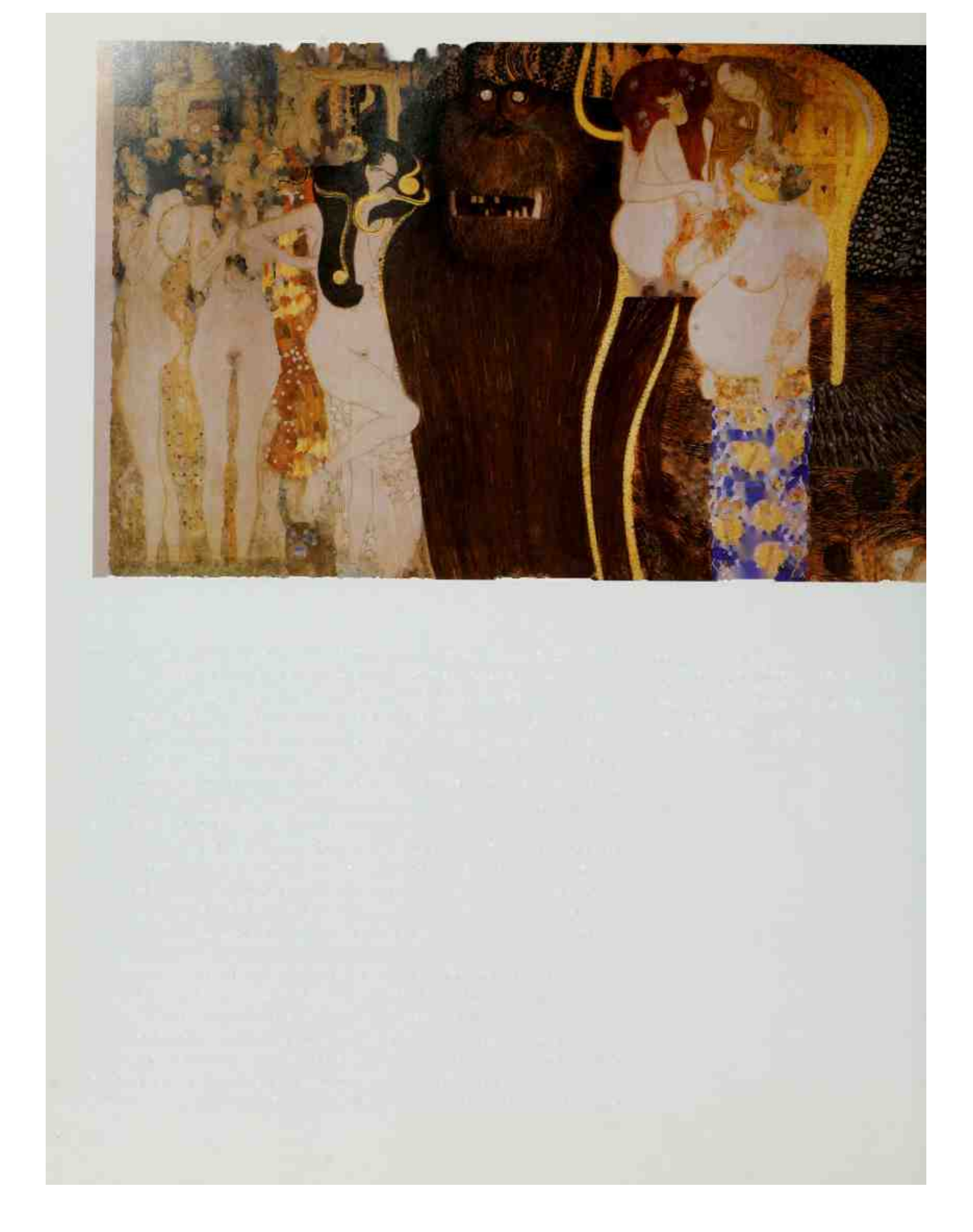


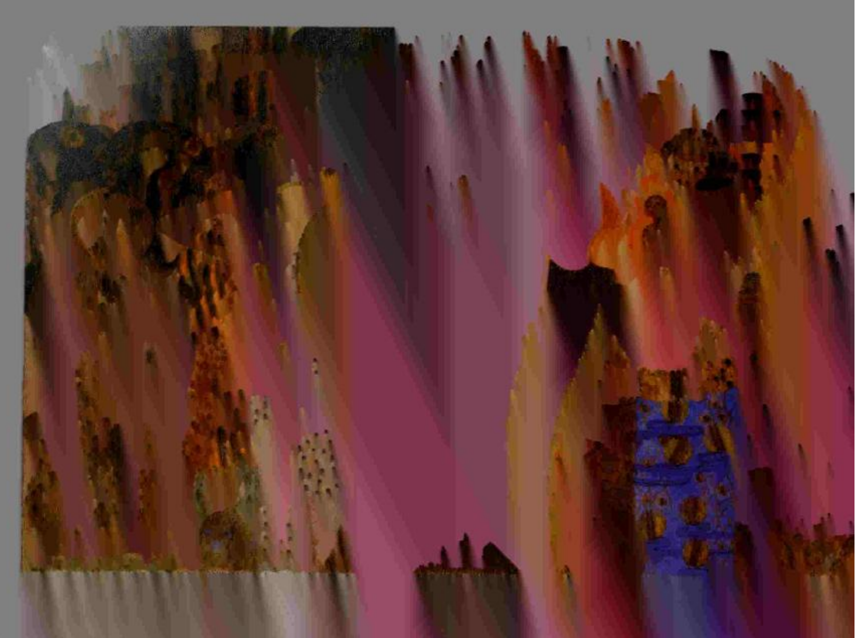


of female identity, which is split up and disintegrated. There were four











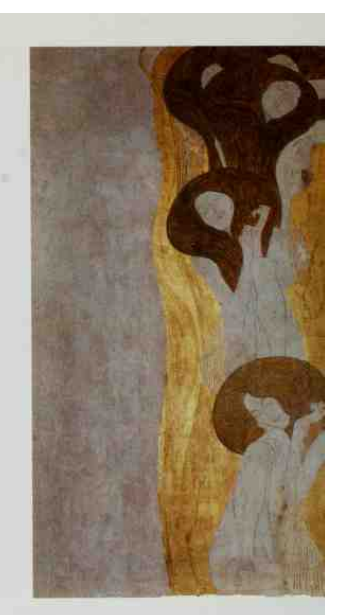


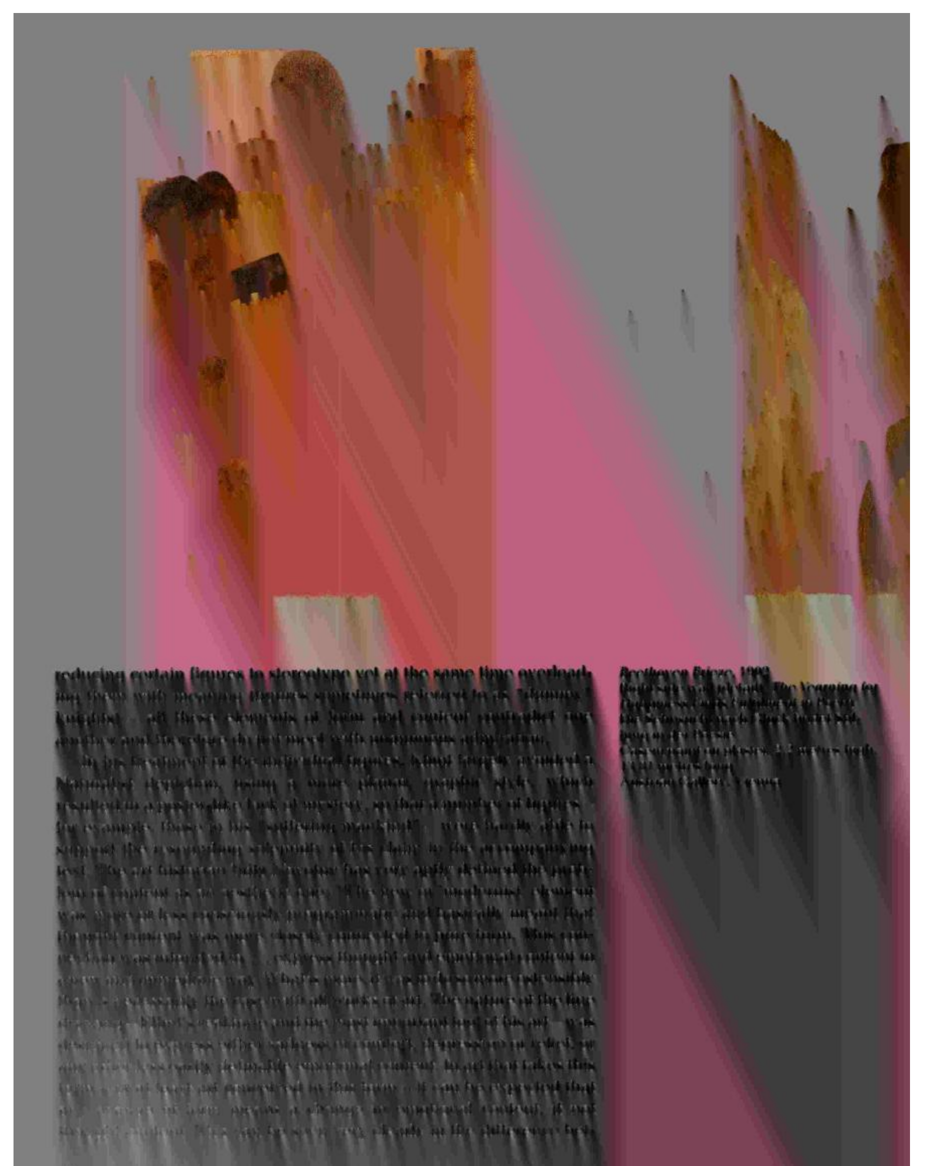


of the Secession in art, politics and culture, it seems extremely plausible that the conspicuous division into three parts, with its contrast between the "work of salvation" and the "hostile forces", also embodies a critique of contemporary civilization.

The utopian vision of universal brotherhood which Beethoven had proclaimed in his "Ninth Symphony" – a vision where the whole of mankind would be set free from its pains – was contrasted with the chaos and corruption of modern civilization and the constraints imposed from above by the State and the Church. The hostile forces in the painting apparently also included those forces which obstructed his own development as an artist. The shock effect of this mural was a consciously calculated part of the general impact. The ape-like monster, with its pearl-studded eyes and the wings of the worst possible [illegible], and the female figures standing brightly against the dark ornamental [illegible], shocked the visitors as they entered the room.

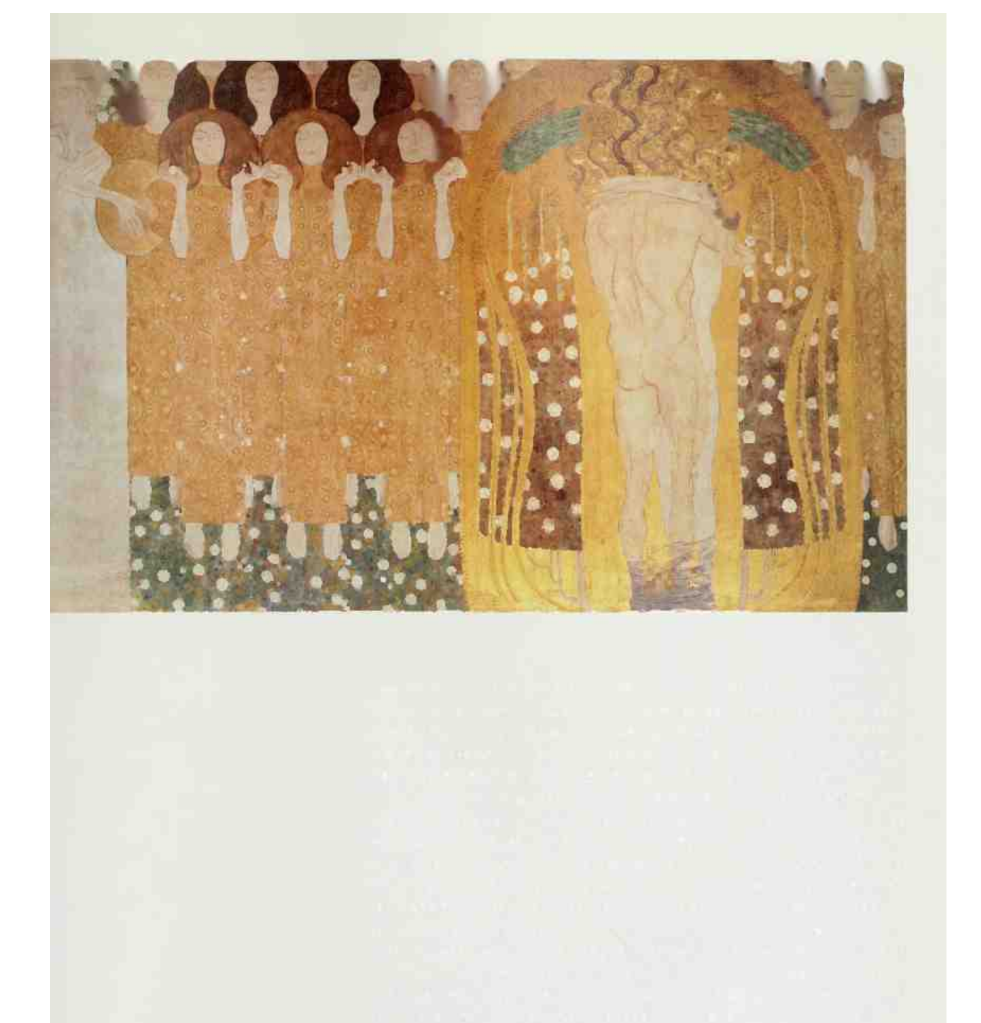
The *Beethoven Frieze* is generally considered to be the turning point in Klimt's artistic career, though his stylistic advances have never been regarded entirely uncritically. His stylization, which sometimes had a considerable [illegible], the [illegible] of his two-dimensional, sculpture-like figures, his contrasts between colours, contours and undecorated [illegible], his predilection for

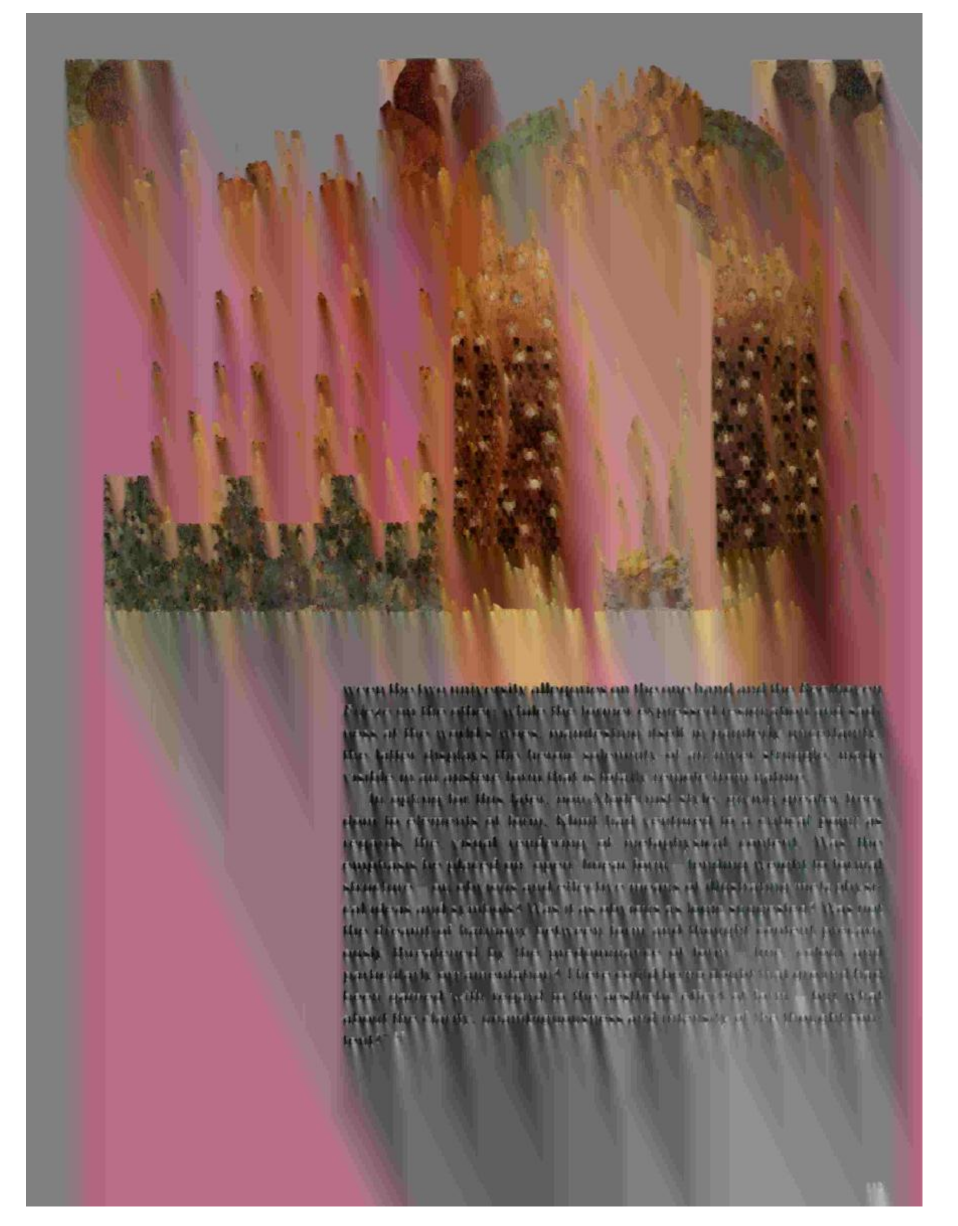



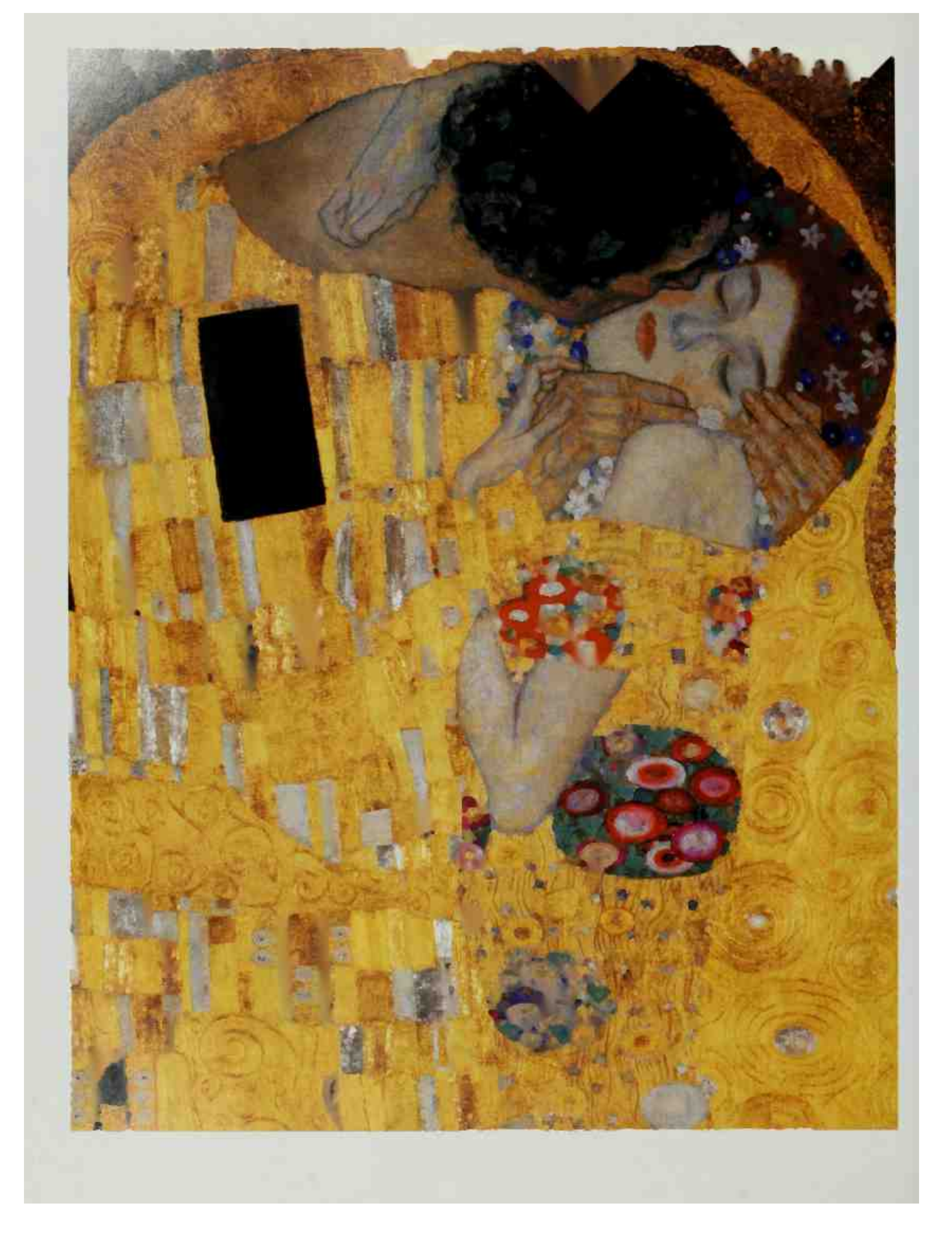


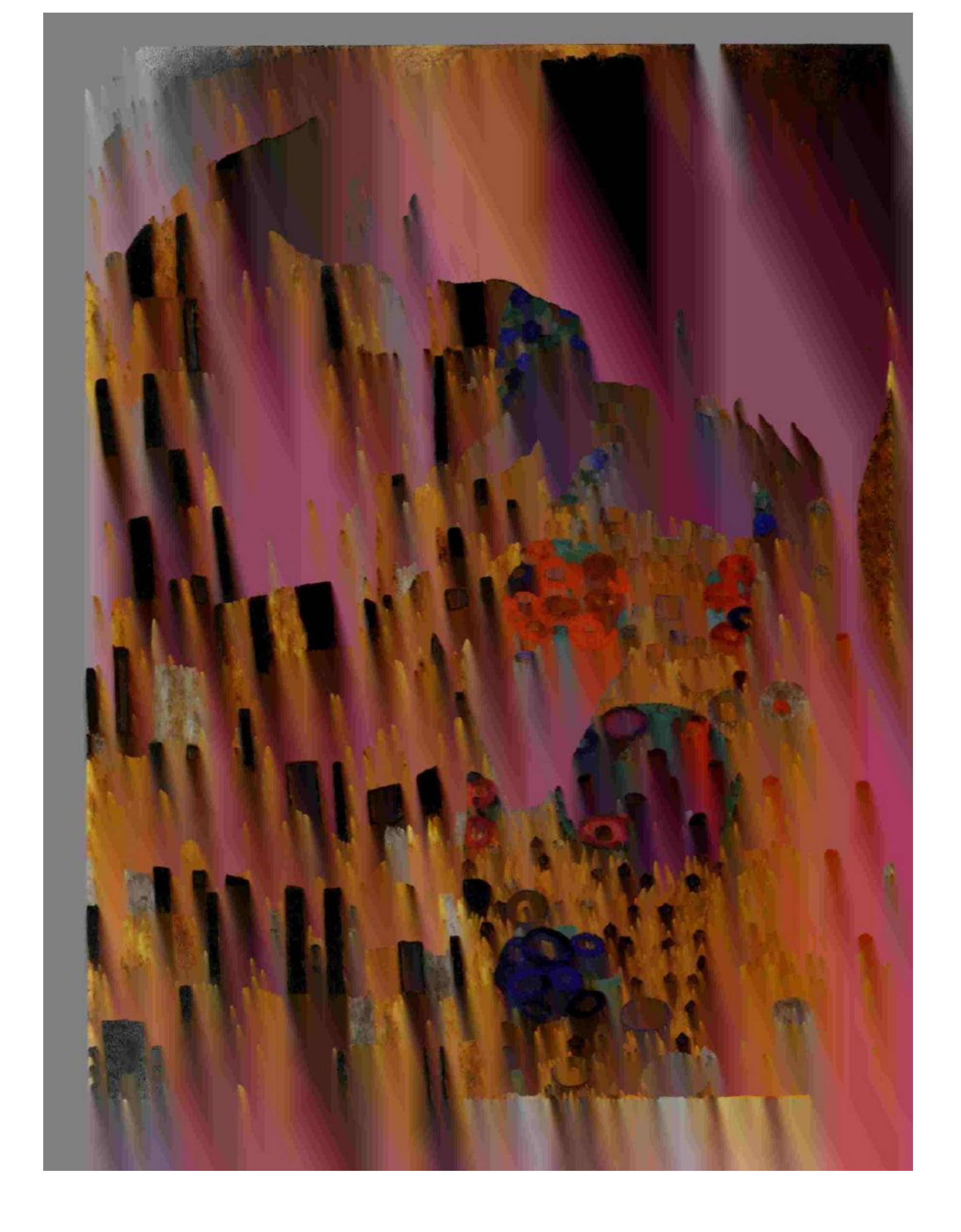
reducing certain figures to stereotype yet at the same time overload- [illegible]

Beethoven Frieze, 1902
[illegible] The Longing for [illegible]
[illegible]
Austrian Gallery, Vienna

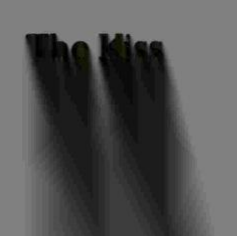


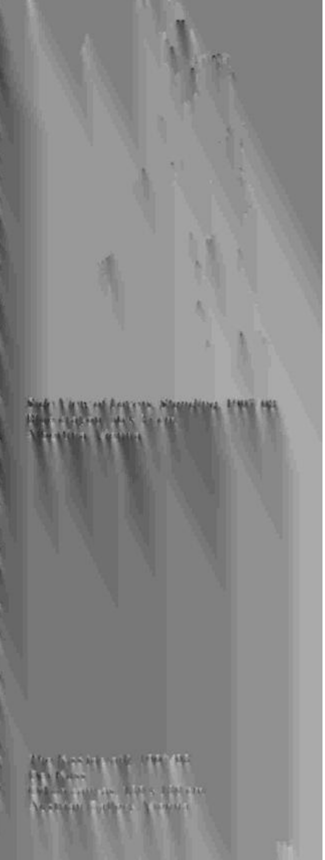


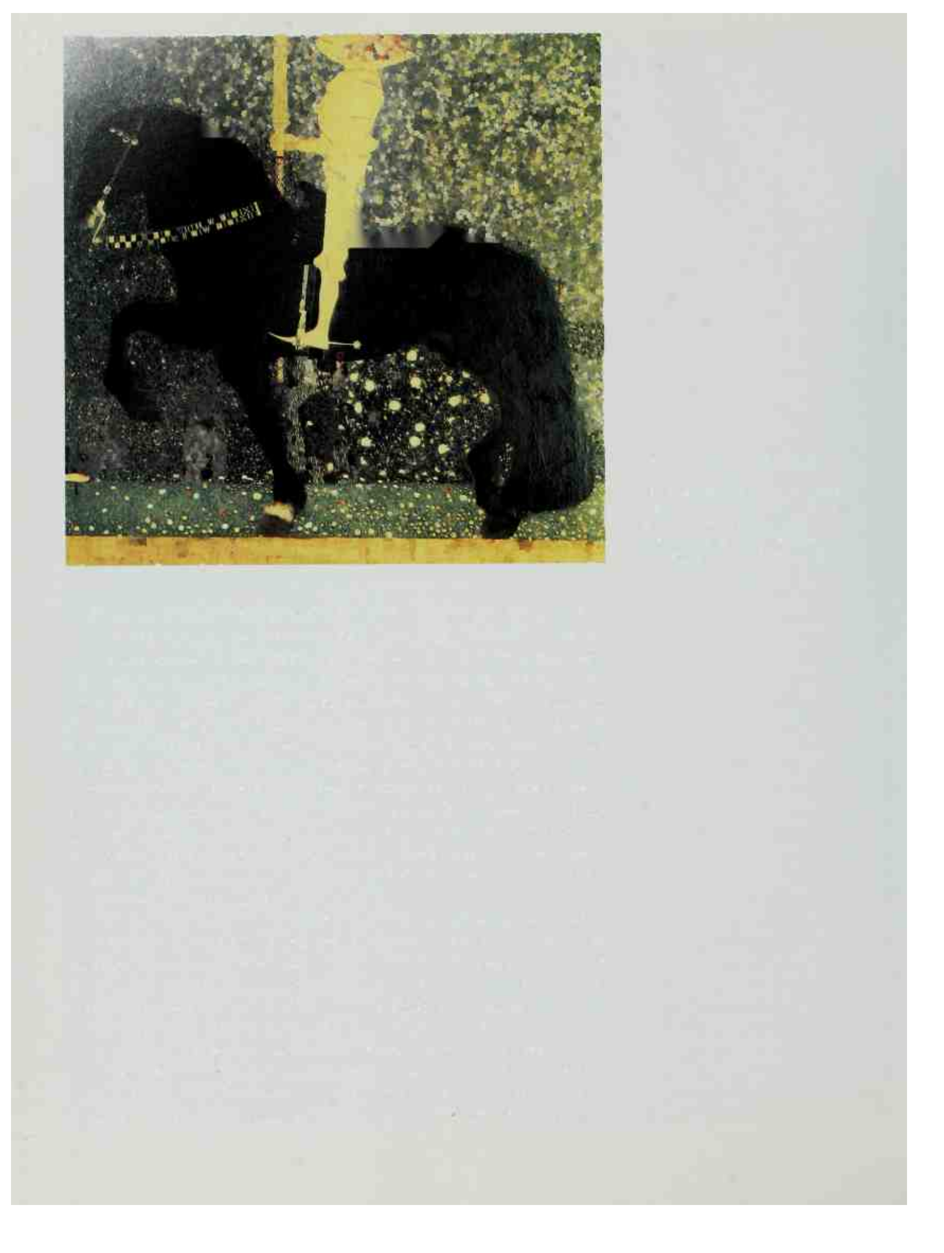










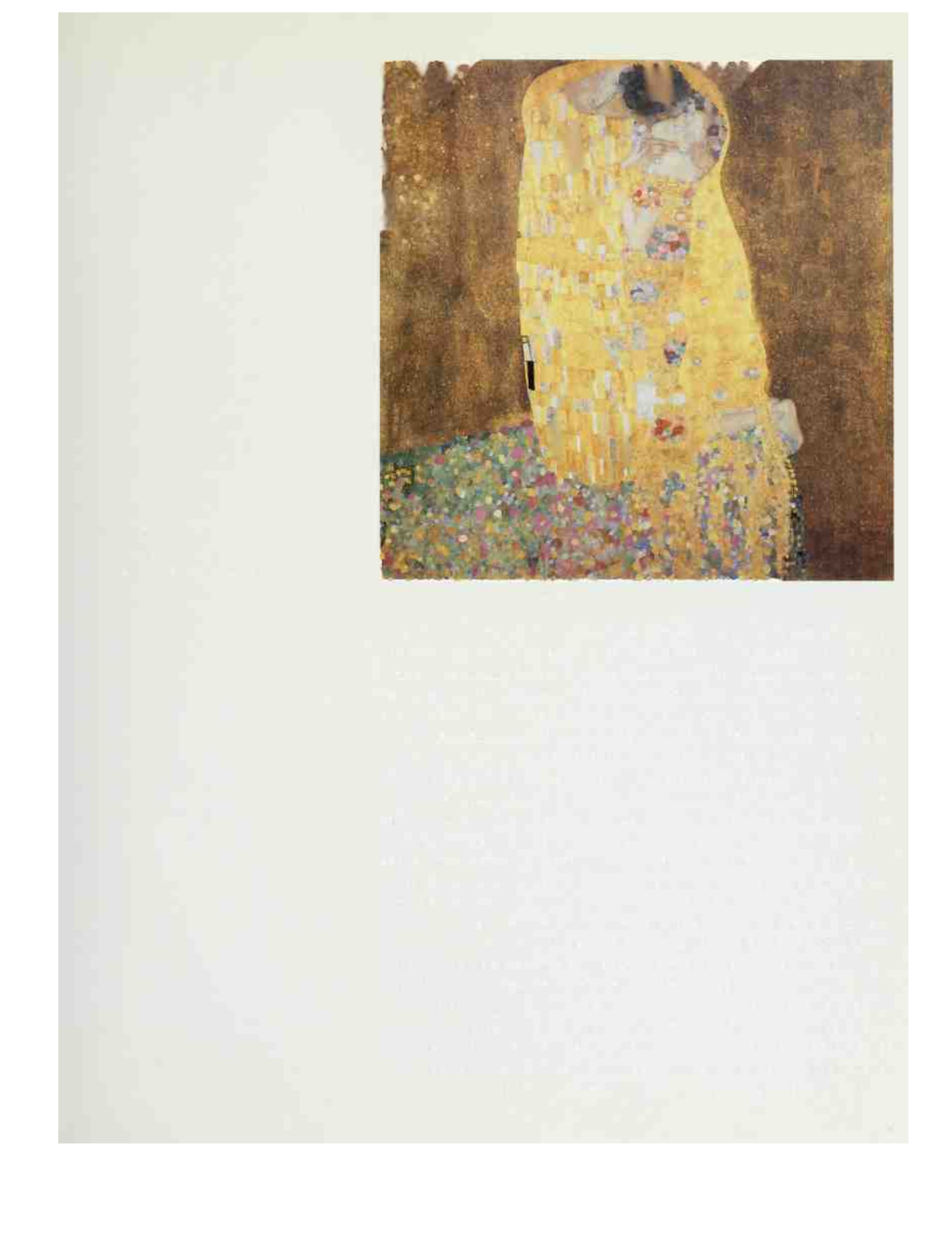


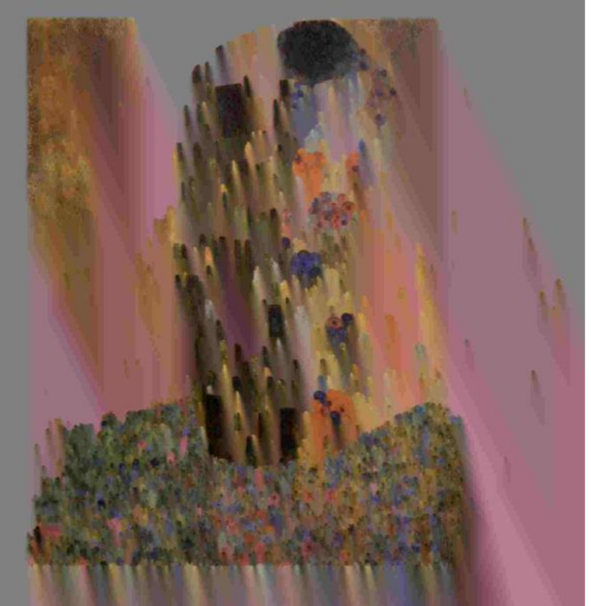


Life is a Struggle (The Golden Knight), 1903
[illegible]
New York

Because of the ornamental symbolism in the lovers' garments, the picture has often been described as symbolizing their union. However, it is precisely these ornamental elements which here distinguish male and female [illegible] cally distinctive features. The man has been given "phallic" forms – rectangular areas of black, white and grey – while the woman is endowed with the "soft" features of coloured, flowery and curved elements. So although the lovers' embrace, their self-contained silhouette, their background and their golden garments suggest a single configuration, the two figures can nevertheless be distinguished by their own specific ornaments. However, the ornamentation also fixes their sexual differences. Indeed, it is only these ornaments which indicate, in an abstract and symbolic way, the "little difference" between them.

"In *The Kiss* he [Klimt] has taken away the male-female tension from the two bodies and delegated it to the opposition of rectangular and round configurations. Thus, instinct and desire have been converted into a scheme of ornamental contrasts."[22] This shift of the instinctive element from persons and bodies to ornaments also brings the [illegible]





The Kiss, 1907/08
Der Kuss
Oil on canvas, 180 x 180 cm
[illegible] Galerie, Vienna

of a formal nature that could be placed with the limits of sexual differentiation can be seen in all his works. In his mosaic for the side wall in the dining hall of Stoclet Palace [illegible], which will be discussed [illegible], he abandoned this distinction altogether, and both sexes are symbolized within one figure. The process [illegible] the [illegible] of the 'Naturalist' human image [illegible] changed [illegible] '[illegible] of artistic craftsmanship and [illegible] design.' In his Faculty Paintings (pp. [illegible]) Klimt had shown the [illegible] ment of a [illegible] suppressed [illegible] both of the [illegible] classes. In his Stoclet Frieze he [illegible] this [illegible] by rendering the figures even further while at the same time stripping them of any meaning that might point beyond them. In return, he had to accept the power of the [illegible]. [illegible] man's supposed dominance over woman has changed into the dominance of the objects over man. The [illegible] of man which consists of a [illegible] between the sexes and even the final abolition of their differences has become an abstract ornamental mosaic from which virtually all representational features have disappeared.

The [illegible] which surrounds the two lovers in *The Kiss* is defined by the man, whose back determines the line of its contour. This [illegible] which seems to have a phallic quality, though it has been described as 'flower-like', 'bell-shaped' and '[illegible]' [illegible] This is [illegible] Klimt [illegible]

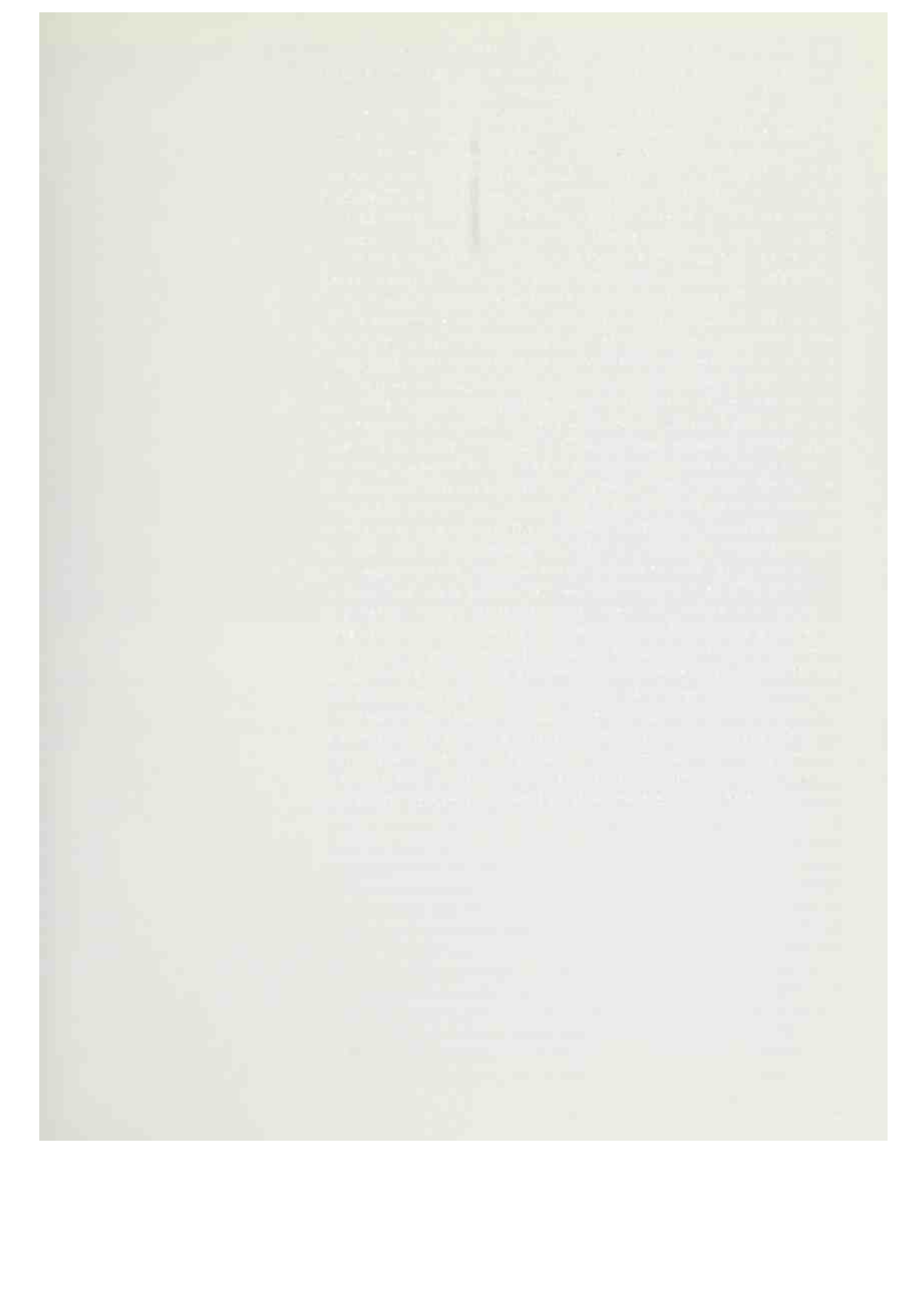


[illegible] were used by Klimt in his *Beethoven Frieze* for the figures of [illegible], in a kind of caricature, he even portrayed himself in the form of a penis. This major symbol of masculinity has its correspondence in the man's bull-necked virility, which almost seems brutal. All the energy of motion in the picture comes from him. He is the one who grasps hold of the woman's head and turns it towards himself so that he can kiss her cheek. The woman, on the other hand, is depicted as passive. Kneeling before the man, she clearly assumes a posture of submission. Klimt's preliminary sketches show that he was particularly troubled by this theme. In these drawings he had experimented with different compositional solutions in order to resolve satisfactorily the difference in height between the man and the kneeling woman. Eventually, he solved the problem by leaving the man's standing posture ambiguous while at the same time hiding the woman's feet [illegible] so that her kneeling posture was emphasized even further. The woman's decorative floral pattern has become a kind of halo, underlining her sentimental passivity.

The painting is full of ambiguities. While exalting the joy of communion, it also questions the identity of the two lovers and their sexuality. As in the back view of the kissing male nude in the *Beethoven Frieze* (p. 112), Klimt leaves no doubt about his hero's masculinity, [illegible] though the figure should not be seen as a self-portrait, as has often been claimed. However, the biological difference is turned into mere abstraction by means of the ornaments.

Also, the merging of the two figures into one large shape must be understood as Klimt's endeavour to neutralize the differences between the sexes. The anatomical and biological element that determines their difference – the phallus – has been [illegible] in the form of a monumental [illegible] which defines the two people and their sexes. The utopian idea of reconciling the sexes and of neutralizing their difference [illegible] becomes dominated by the male.

The composition of the painting suggests two related ways of identifying with it. The viewer is invited to identify with the man. He is the one who controls the developments within the painting, whose confirmation of a neutralization of sexual distinctions and who seeks to identify with the female element. The play of abstract ornamentation has already detached this difference from their bodies and [illegible] them [illegible]. The man's identification with the woman is derived from what has been called the crisis of the male ego – for those who prefer a sociopolitical formulation – the crisis of the liberal ego. This crisis also led to the discovery of the feminine traits in man. In the *Beethoven Frieze* they have been [illegible] as [illegible] "female demons". Likewise, in *The Kiss* there is an inkling of sexual division. The image of the woman has, as it were, been woven into that of the man and made subject to the principle of masculinity. The symbolical shape of the phallus also points to the eternal and insoluble separation between the sexes, which seems to be far more of a theme in the painting than their union.



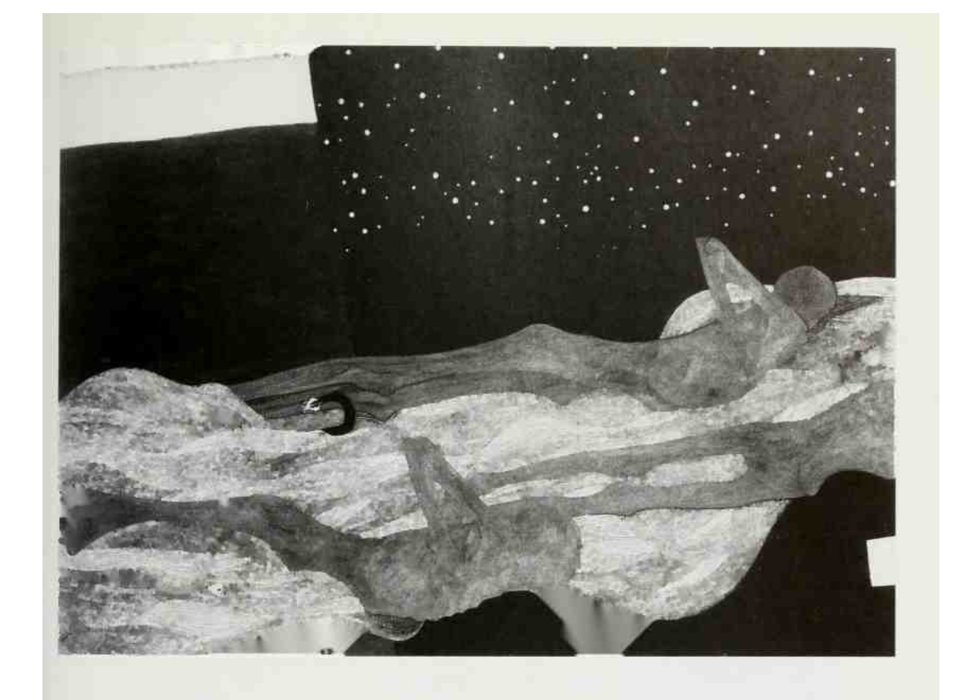


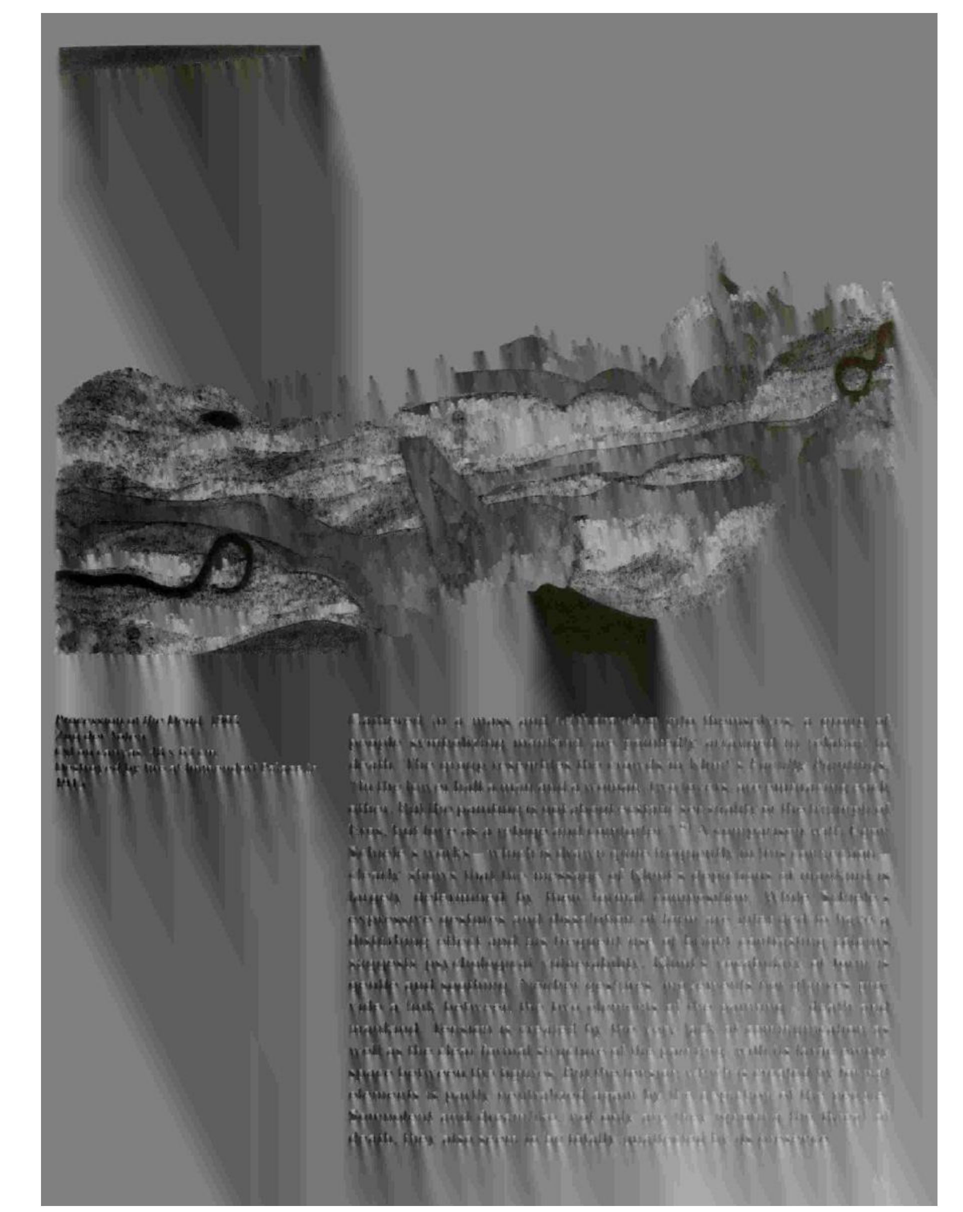
The Three Ages of Woman / Death and Life

In *The Three Ages of Woman* (p. [illegible]) Klimt deals with one of his most central themes – the cycle of life. Using the devices of stylistic contrast and different degrees of realism, he contrasts youth and old age. On the one hand, there is the young woman holding a sleeping child, a "secularized madonna" (Eva di Stefano), herself somewhat [illegible] stylized and part of the ornamental background. On the other hand we see the Naturalist profile of the despairing old woman, [illegible] covering her face with her hand. These are not just stages or periods in a woman's life, but aspects of womanhood. "The contrast between the stylized girl and the Naturalistic old woman has a [illegible] of value", writes Eva di Stefano. "The first phase of life is characterized by an infinite number of possibilities and metamorphoses, while the last phase is marked by an unchangeable uniformity that does not allow one to escape confrontation with reality. The first phase is characterized by a dream ... the last by the impossibility of dreaming."

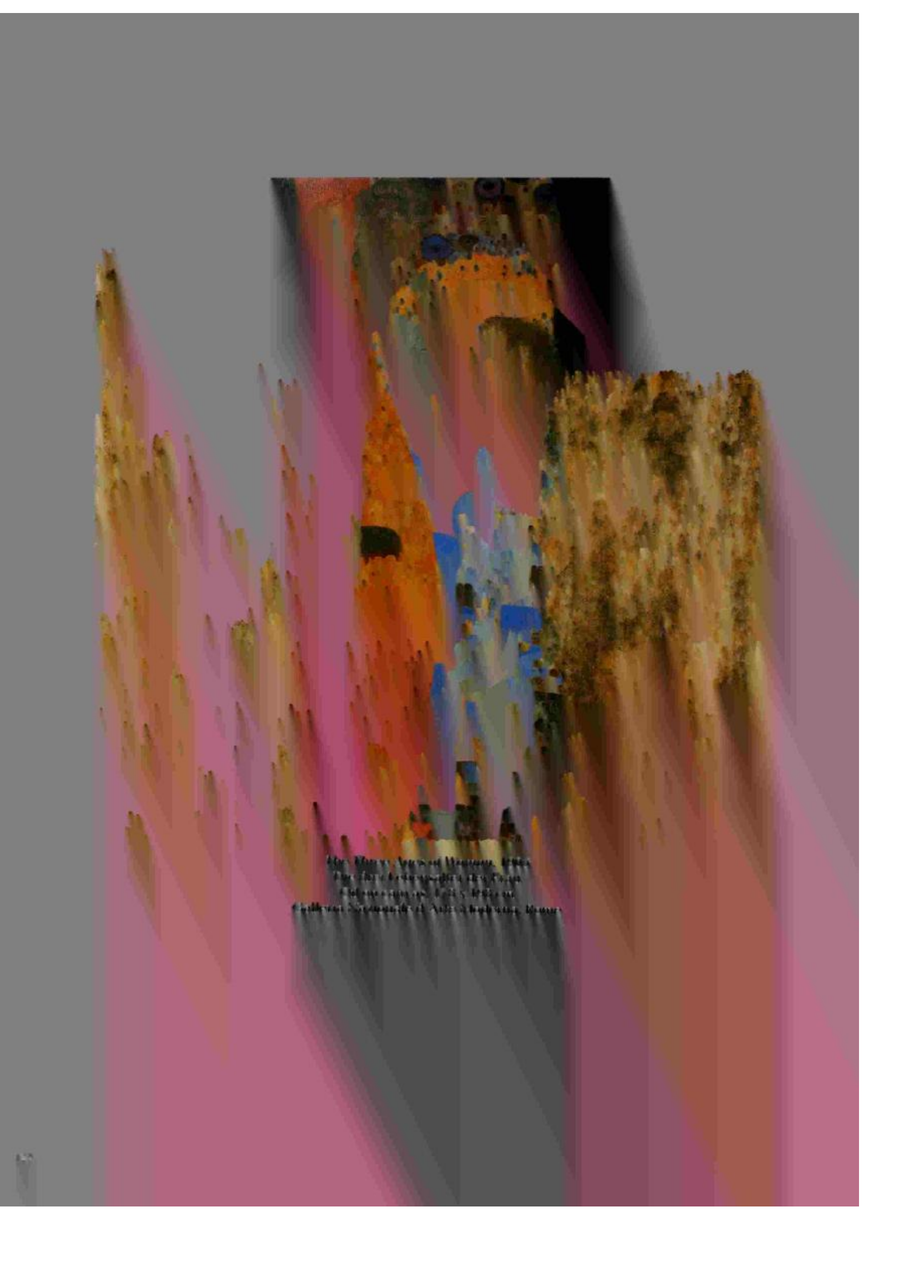
As in *The Kiss*, the figures are enveloped in the symbolical shape of a phallus. However, whereas both sexes are represented in *The Kiss*, the identification of the artist in *The Three Ages of Woman* takes place entirely through different stages of womanhood, ranging from regressive dreaming and its alter ego in the [illegible] and approaching death. Could the abstract presence of the male element in the ornamental shape of a phallus perhaps express the desire to identify with womanhood, as in *The Kiss*? If so, Klimt has depicted the regressive utopia of a life cycle – perceived as both feminine and natural – subject to male domination in content and form. The same desire for identification may possibly be corroborated by yet another of Klimt's obsessions – the prenatal, regressive [illegible], which is also present in this painting in the form of motherhood. Embryonic childlikeness can often be found in his oeuvre, including many of his drawings. Two of his most famous paintings were devoted to pregnancy, and he also depicted pregnant women in his [illegible]. [illegible] and a childlike unconsciousness is contrasted in *The Three Ages of Woman* with its pessimistic [illegible] approaching death.

[illegible] Eva di Stefano [illegible] the painting is based on traditional depictions of vanity. *Death and Life* (p. [illegible]) may stem from the [illegible] of history. However, [illegible] Klimt's [illegible] social differences [illegible] in the face of death. Again, the dominant element in the painting is [illegible]

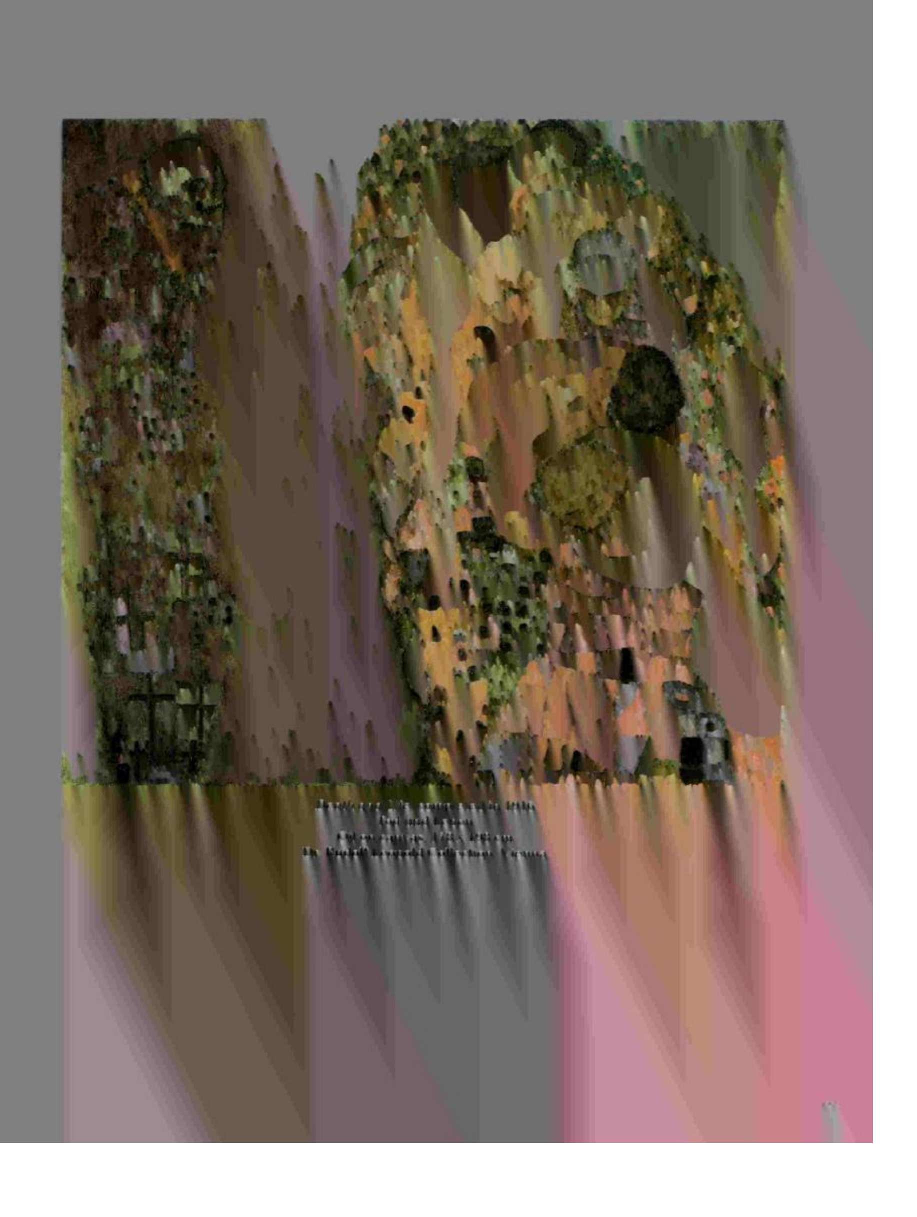




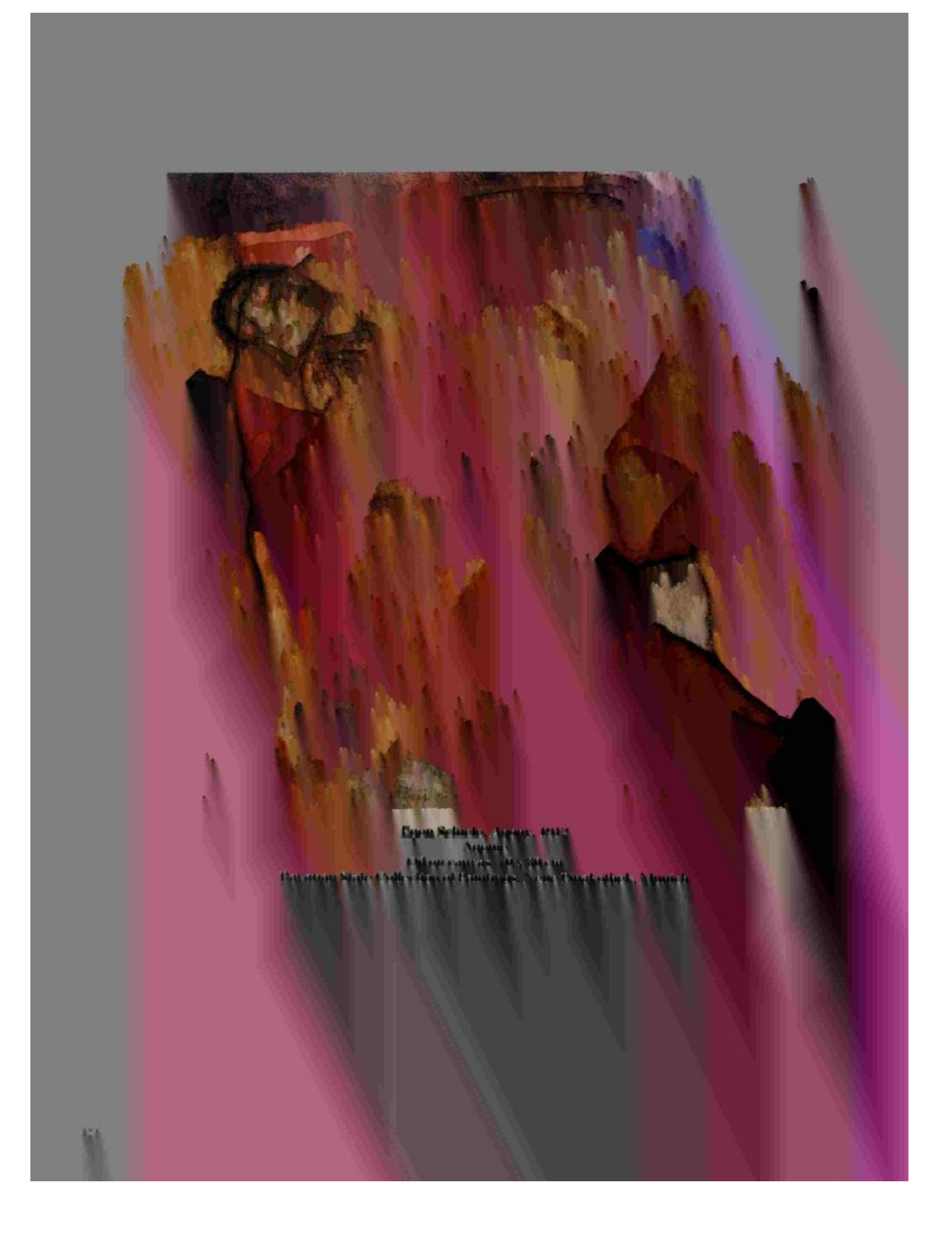






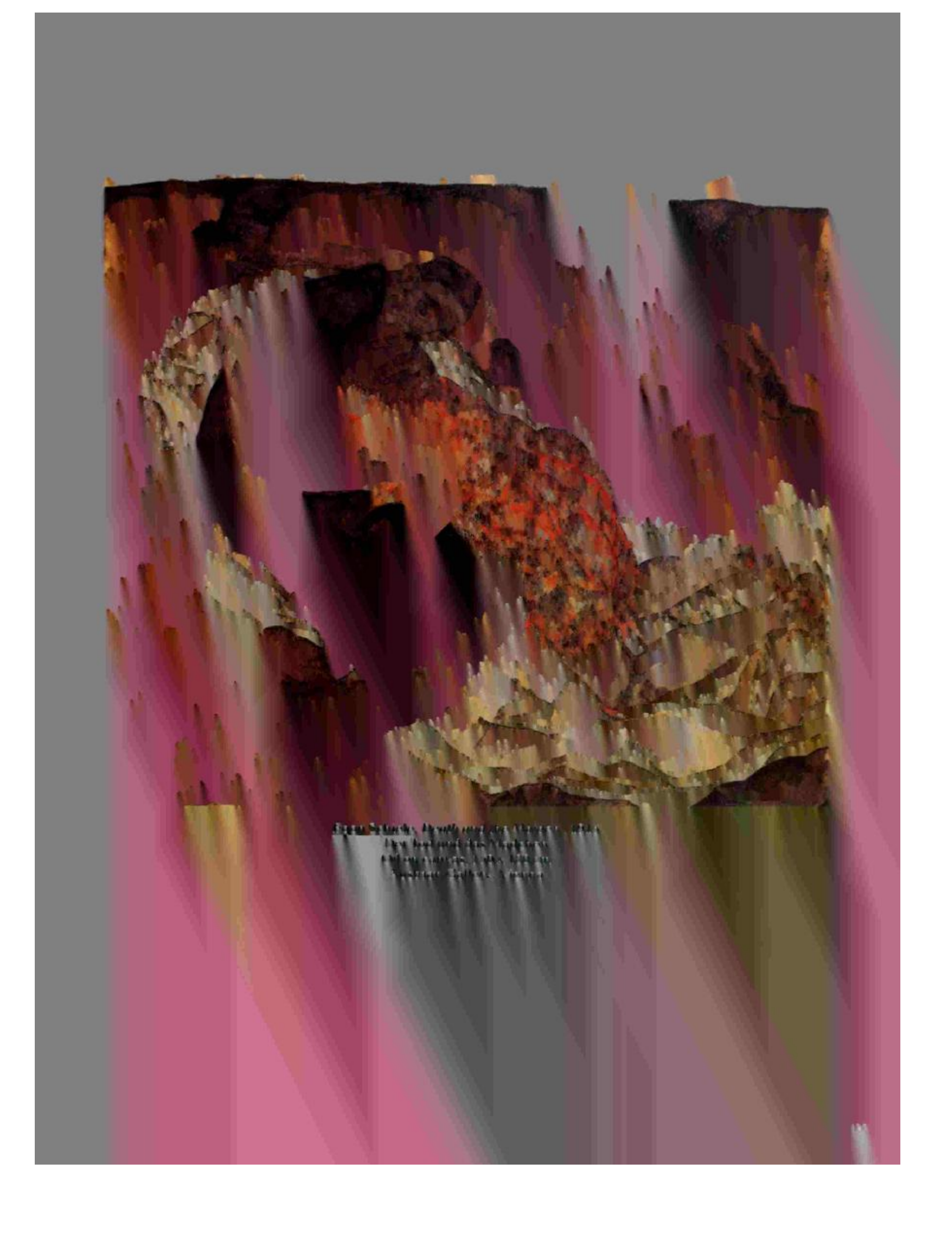


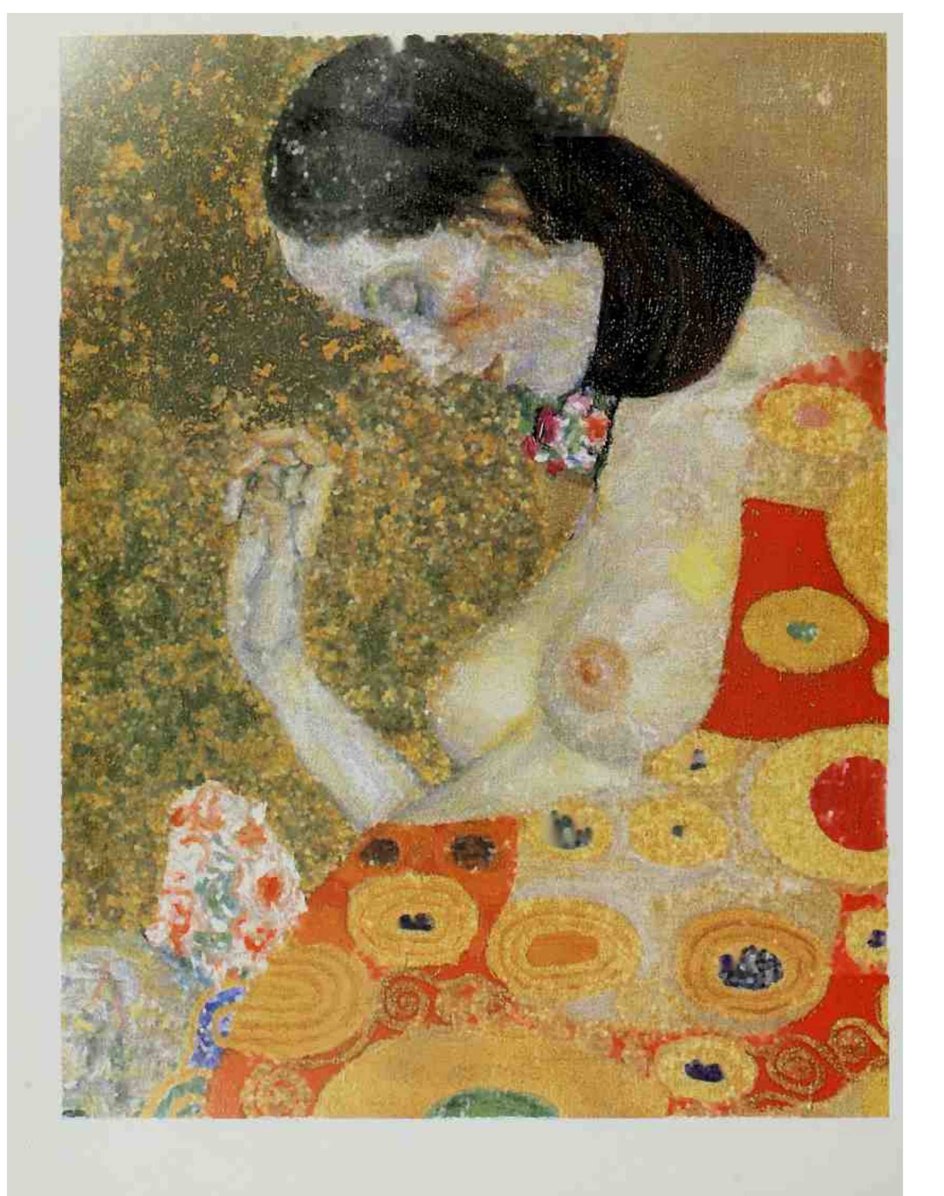


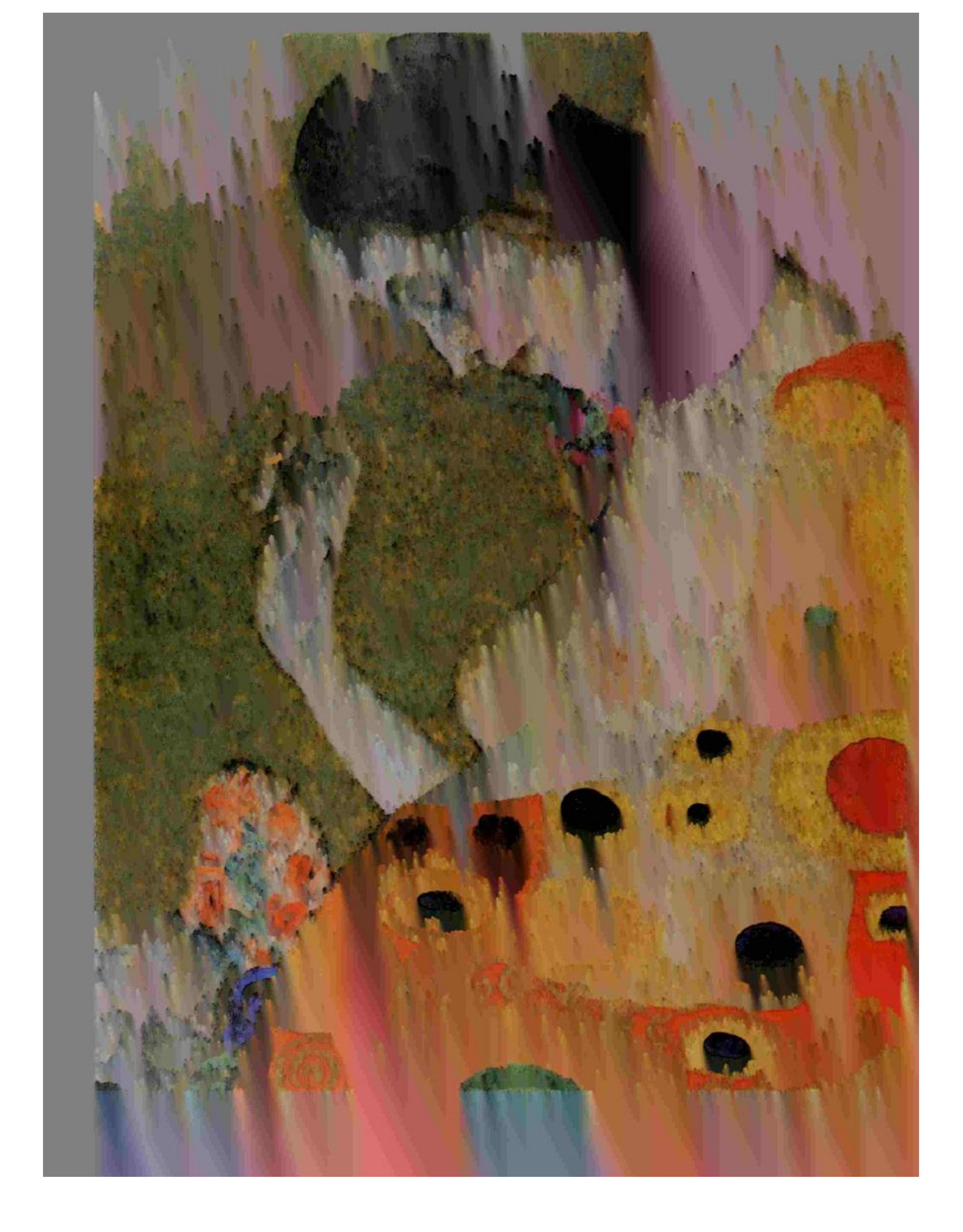


Egon Schiele, Agony, 1912
Agonie
Oil on canvas, 70 x 80 cm
Bavarian State Collection of Paintings, Neue Pinakothek, Munich











Hope

Klimt's 1903 painting of a pregnant nude, entitled *Hope* (p. [illegible]), is one of his few works where the circumstances of its origins are relatively well-known. It therefore occupies a special place in the painter's oeuvre. Klimt, who consciously accepted that many of his pictures offended against aesthetic and moral norms, here created an artwork dealing with a topic which [illegible] in the history of art [illegible] in [illegible]. Thus, he could assume from the very beginning that *Hope* would violate some taboos, and in fact it was not exhibited in public at first. It is said that the Minister of Education, von Hartel, personally persuaded Klimt not to show it publicly, [illegible] adding further fuel to the controversy over his *Faculty Paintings*.[illegible]

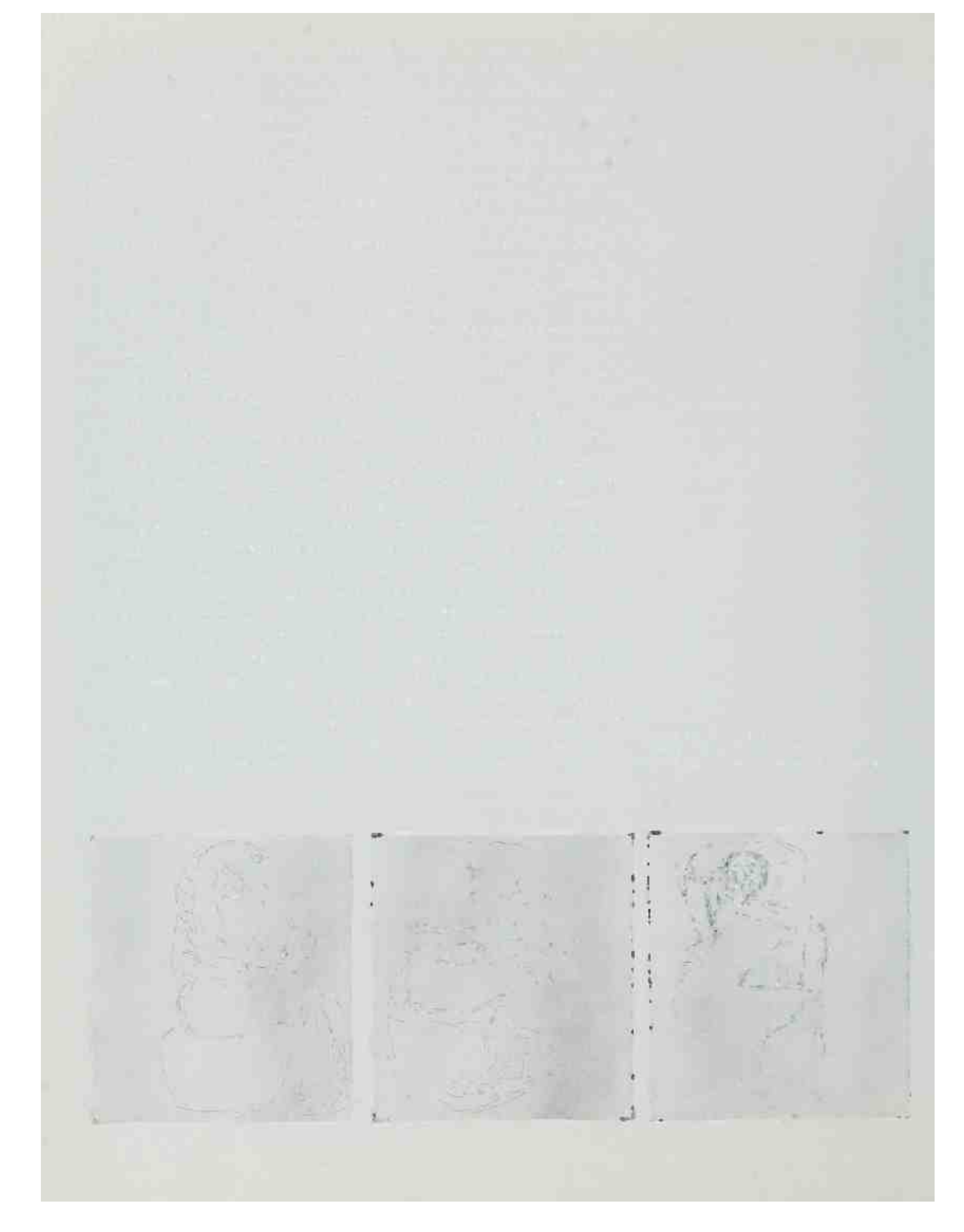
The circumstance that prompted this painting was the pregnancy of one of Klimt's models, a woman known to us only by her first name, Herma. Arthur Roessler, the art critic of the newspaper [illegible], reported that Klimt continued to make her come to his studio even though she refused at first to serve as a model during her pregnancy. But Herma was dependent on her modelling fees in order to support her family, and so she agreed to continue. The artist [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the "[illegible]", whose "backside", according to Roessler, was "more beautiful and intelligent than many other girls' faces."[illegible] In the [illegible] of [illegible] male artists and critics always regarded models as the lowest of the low. The fact that not even the model's [illegible] was considered to be worth mentioning is further evidence of this attitude. Roessler's [illegible] account of the incident reflects the artist's view that models should always be at his disposal. Indeed, he was only interested in the physical aspect.

Klimt was extremely generous towards his models. "They all came to him, all these girls, with their troubles and tribulations ... [illegible] somebody's father had died and there wasn't enough money for the funeral, Klimt paid for it. On another occasion a family was being evicted from their flat; Klimt paid the rent."[illegible] On the other hand, Klimt exploited these [illegible] [illegible] to the full. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] extreme. A painting such as *The Kiss* brought in [illegible] crowns. In a letter to the Wittgenstein family he stipulated that "the commissioned portrait of a life-size portrait by myself" was about [illegible] crowns.[illegible] And for the portrait of Baroness Elisabeth Bachofen-Echt he received [illegible] crowns. When his drafts for the *Faculty Paintings* were [illegible] [illegible]

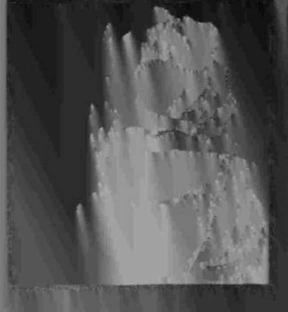


Sketch of a Pregnant Nude, Standing
Study for *Hope I*, 1902–03
Black chalk on [illegible]
[illegible]
Historisches Museum, Vienna

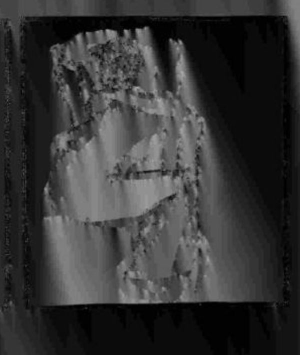
Hope II, 1907–08
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[illegible] The Museum of Modern Art,
New York
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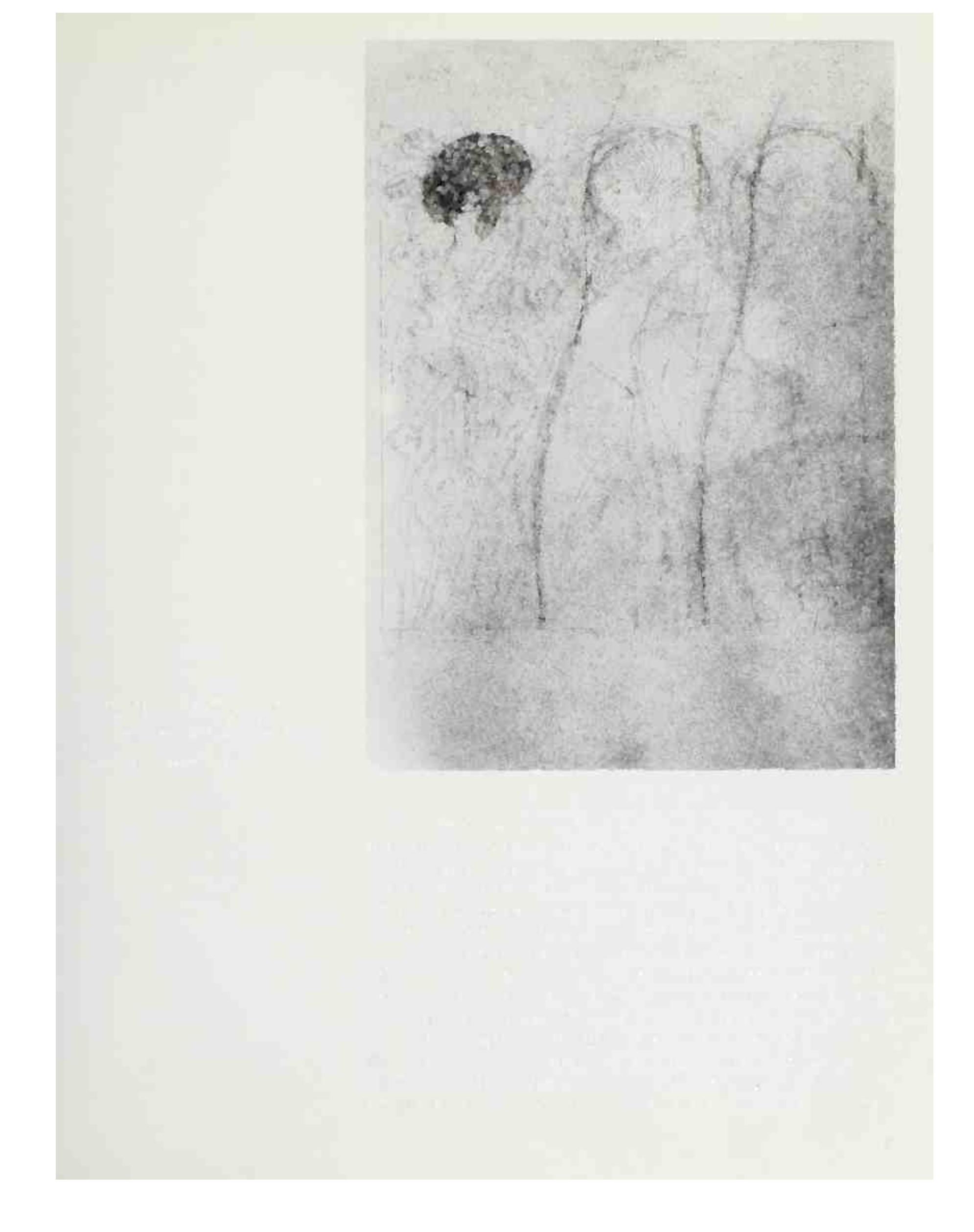










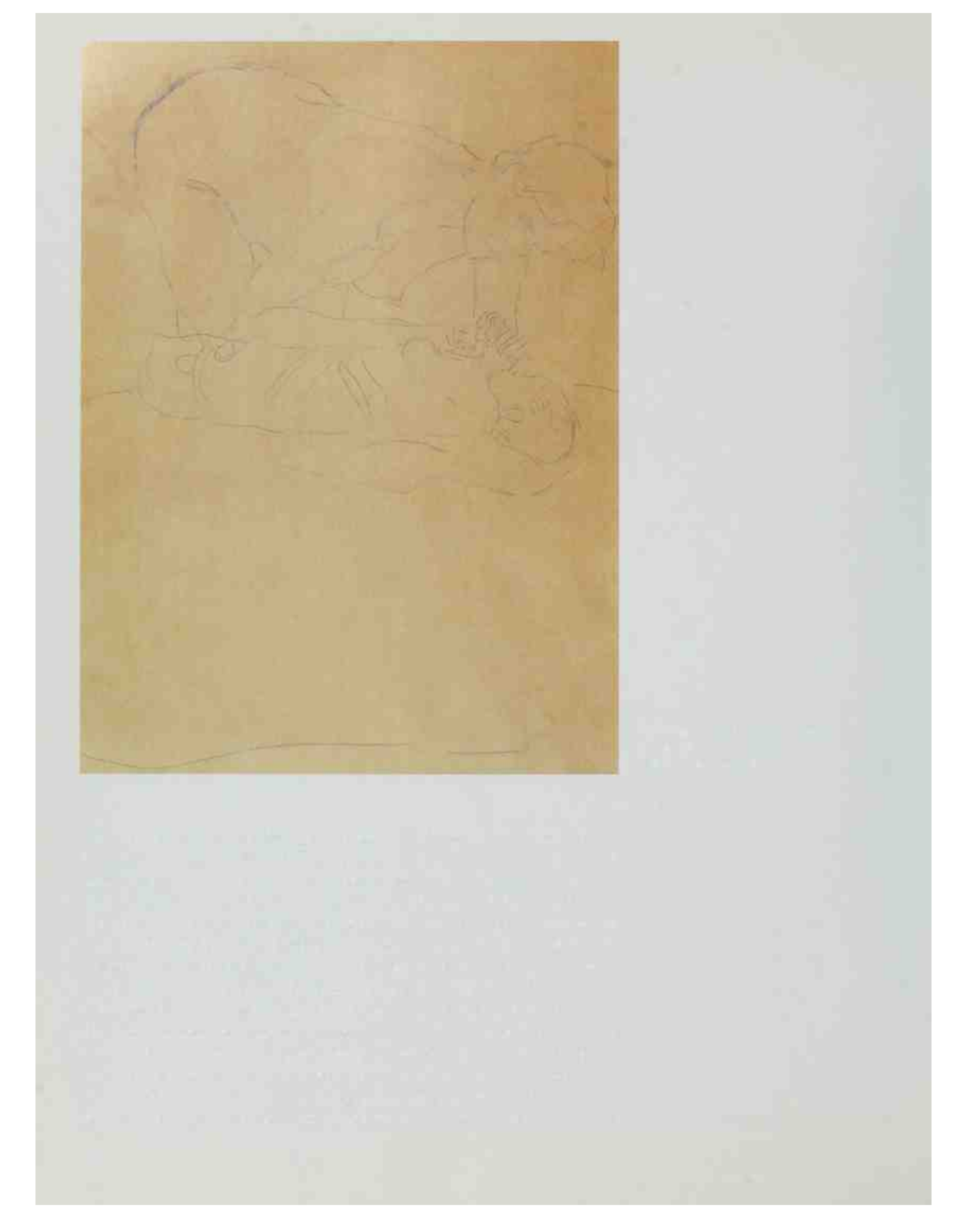


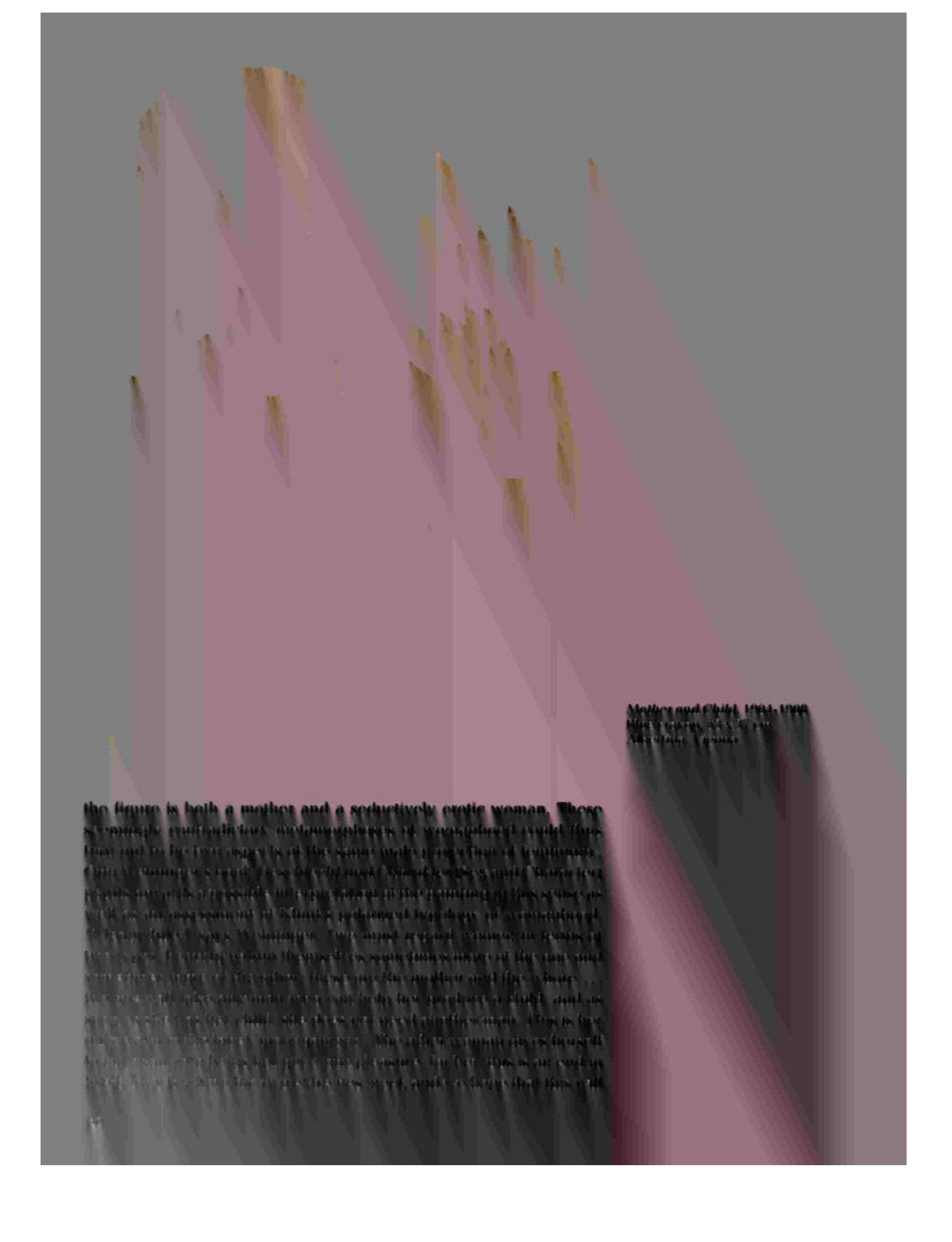




Interpretations of *Hope* have been extremely diverse. It was suggested, for example, that the painting depicted [illegible]

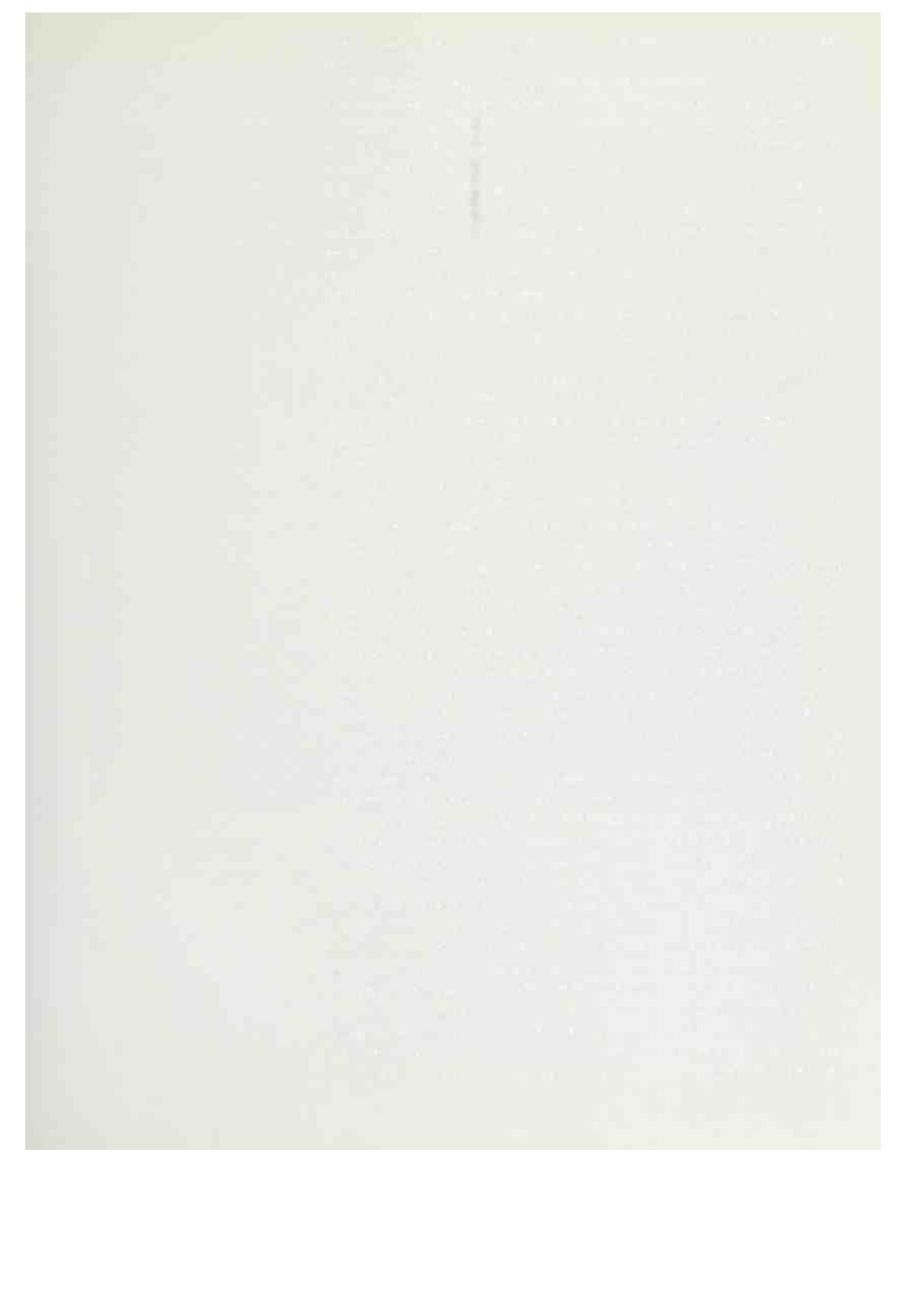
[illegible]





Mother and Child, [illegible]

the figure is both a mother and a seductively erotic woman. These [illegible]



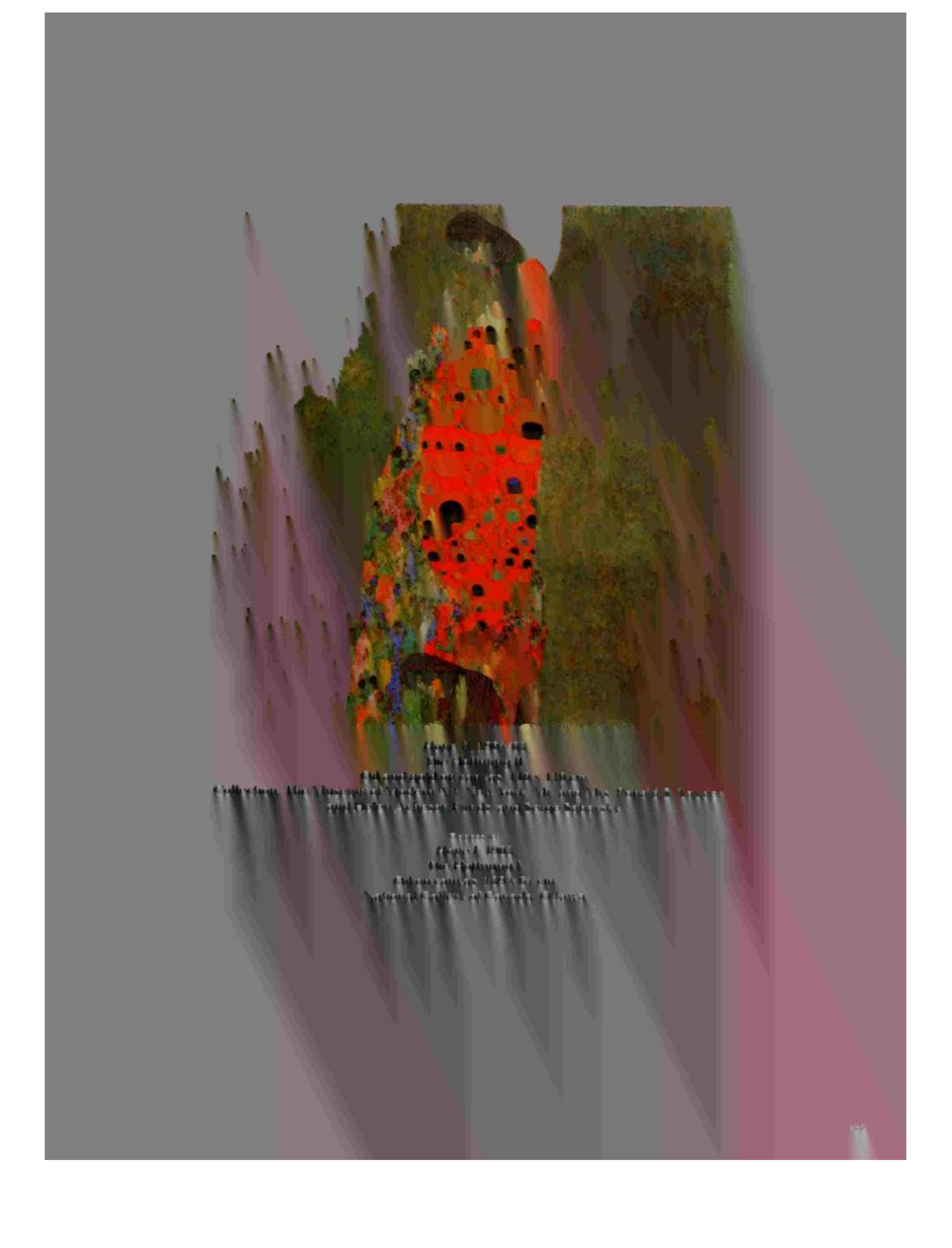




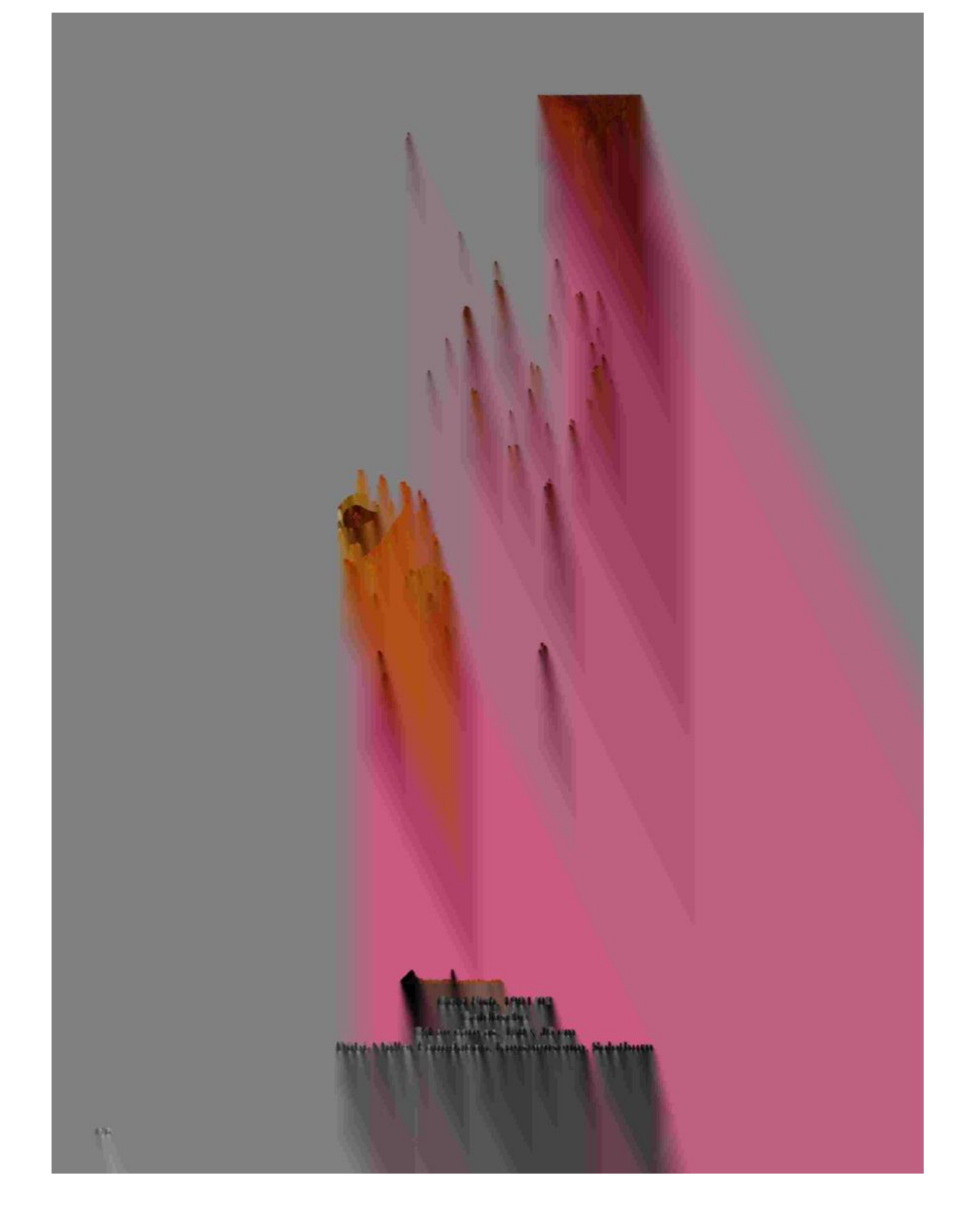






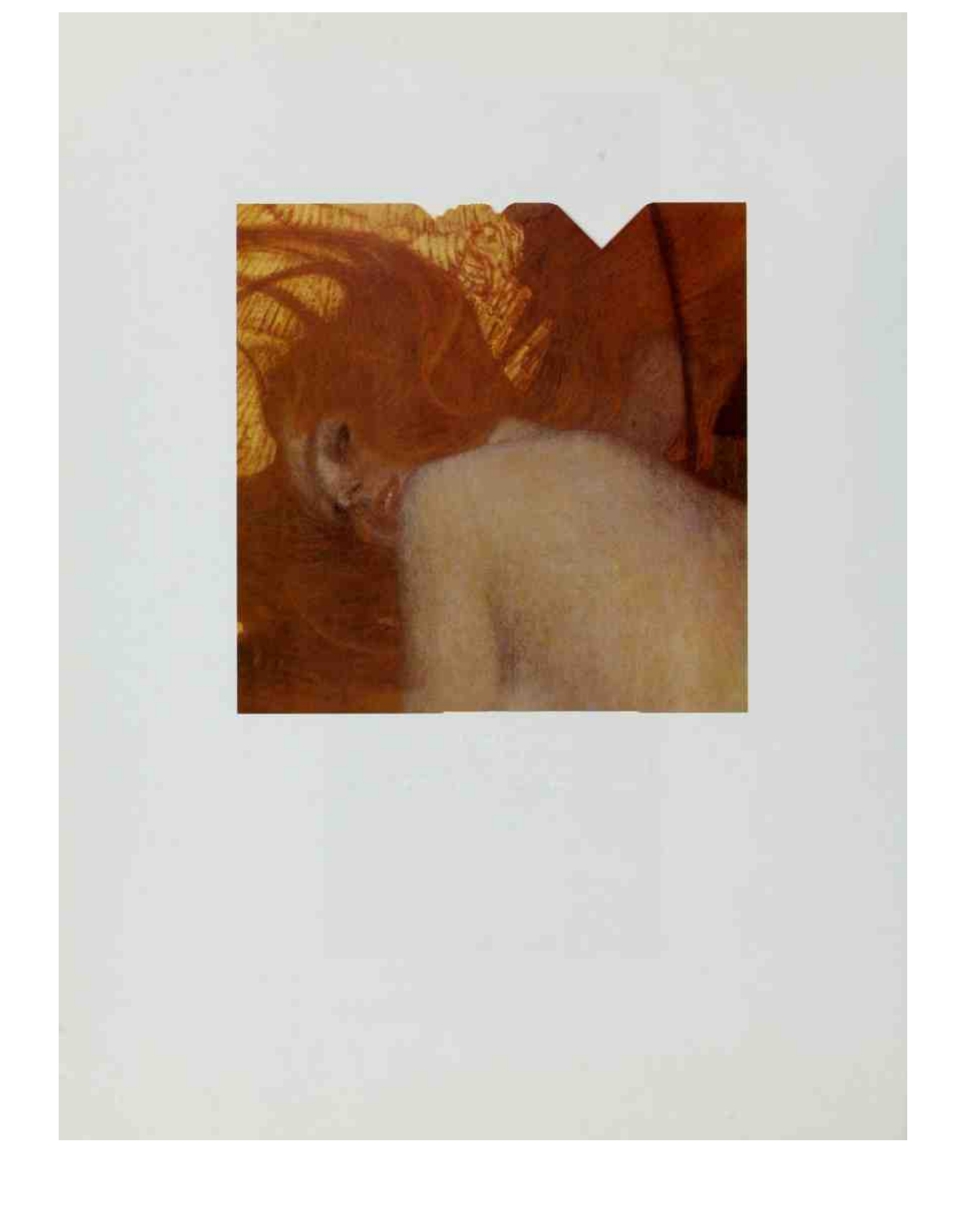


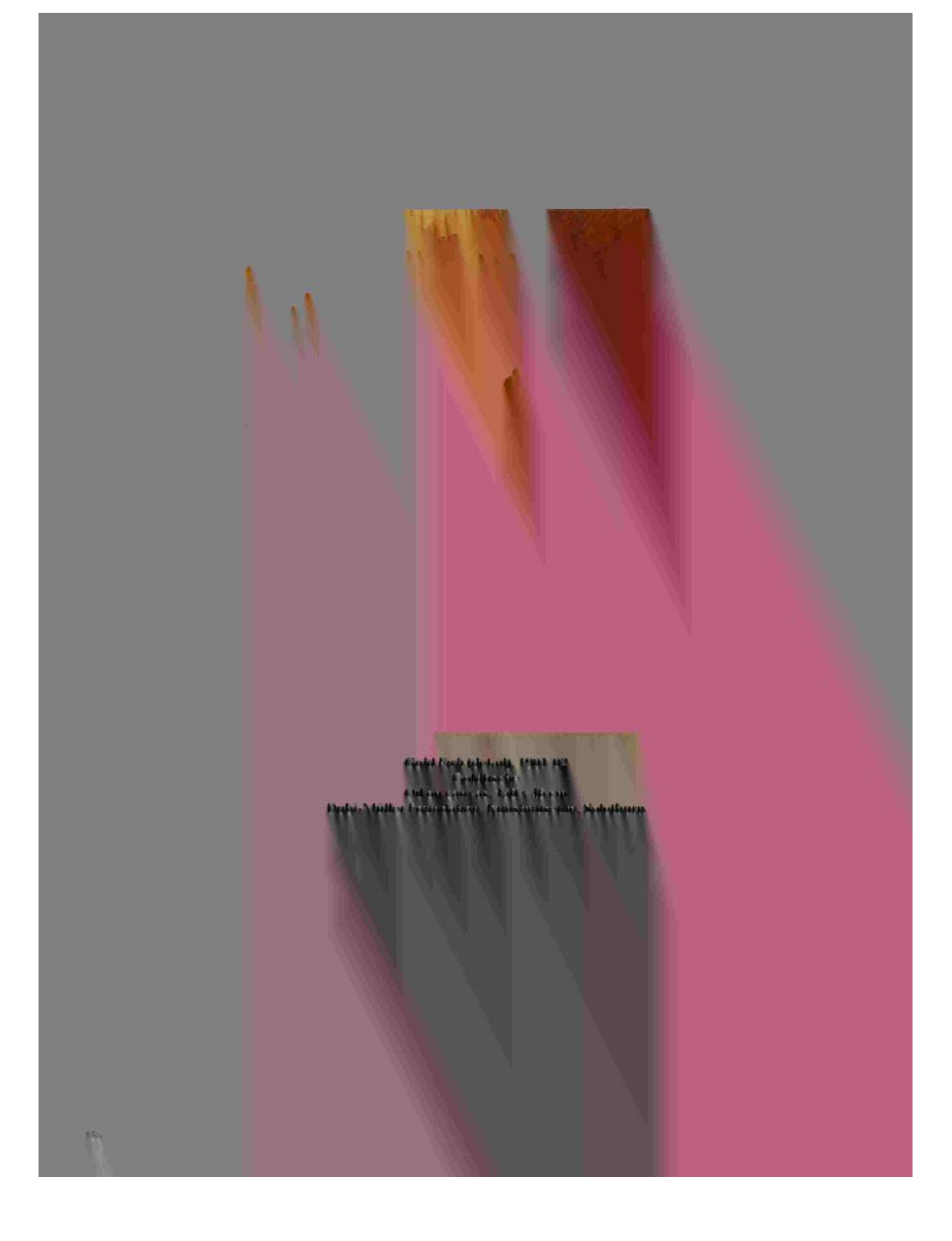




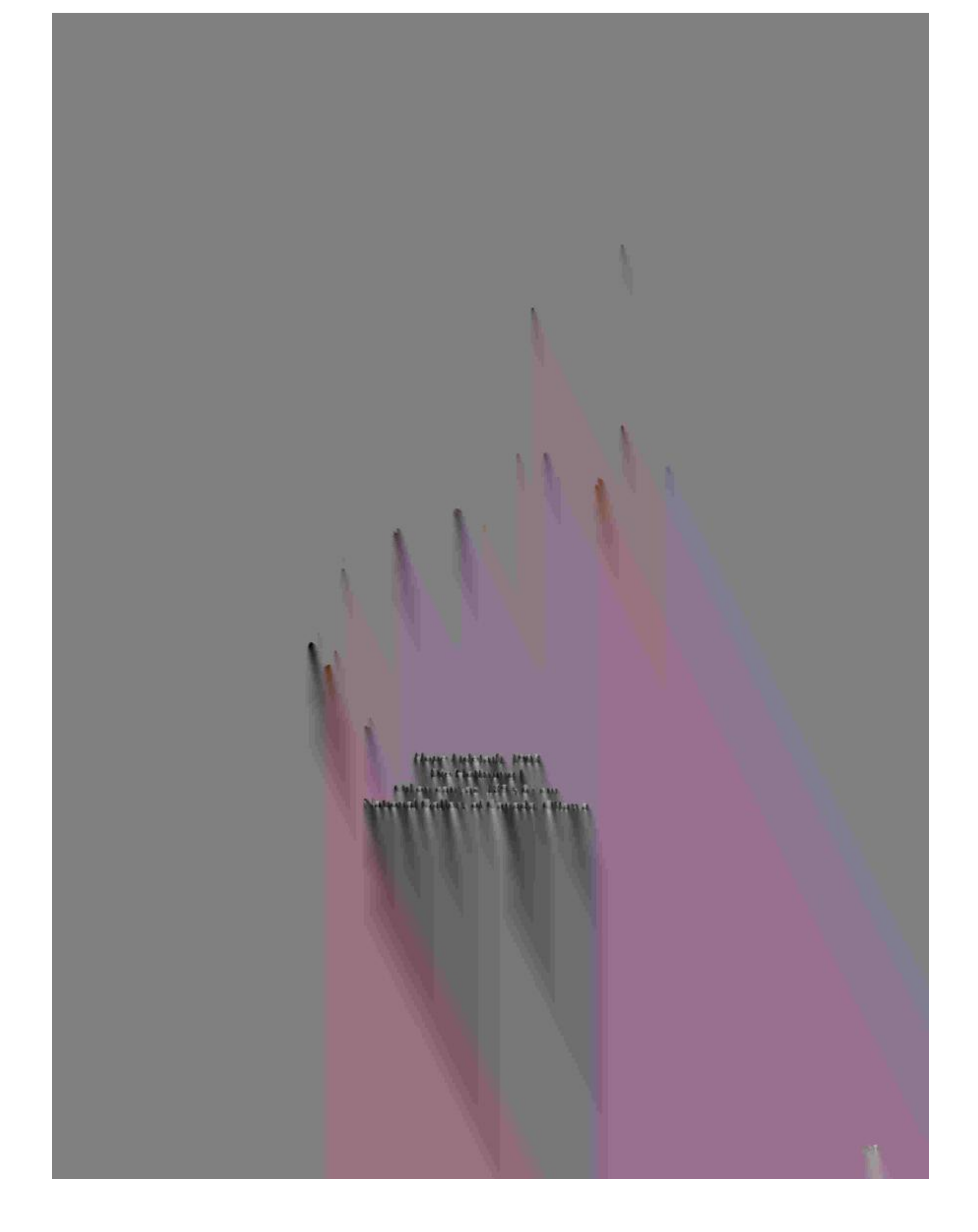




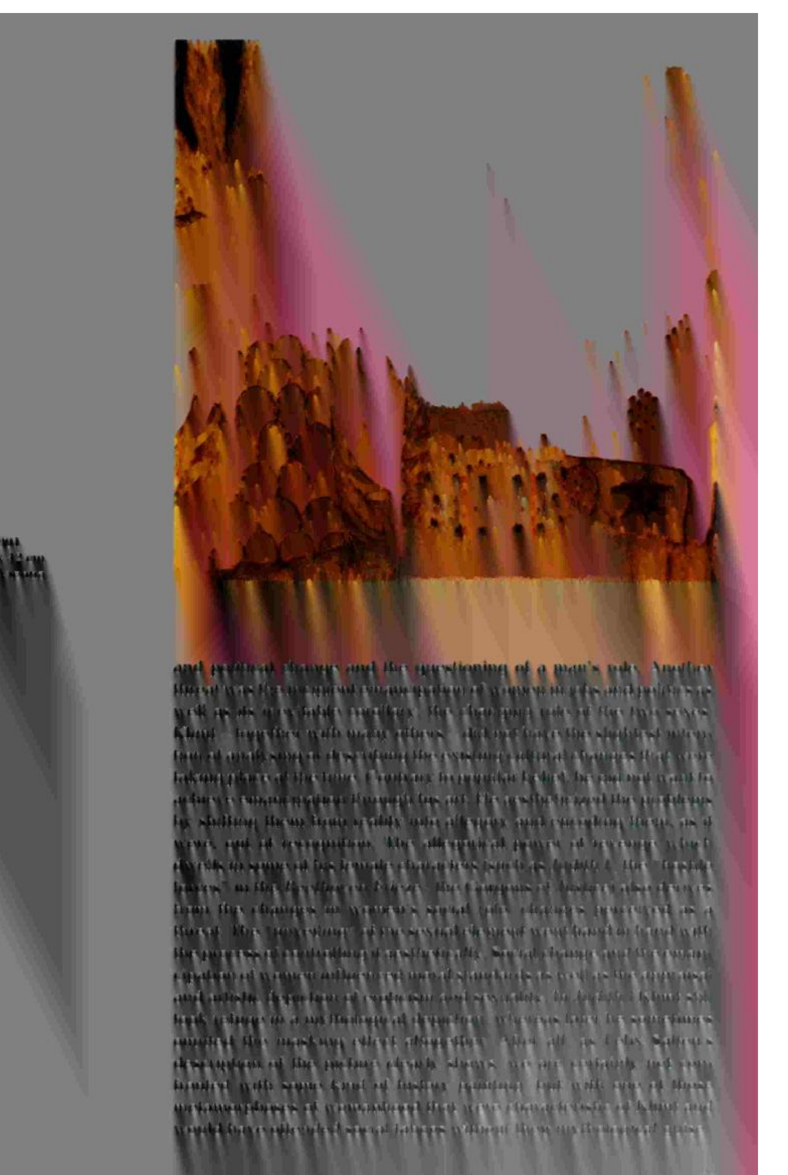




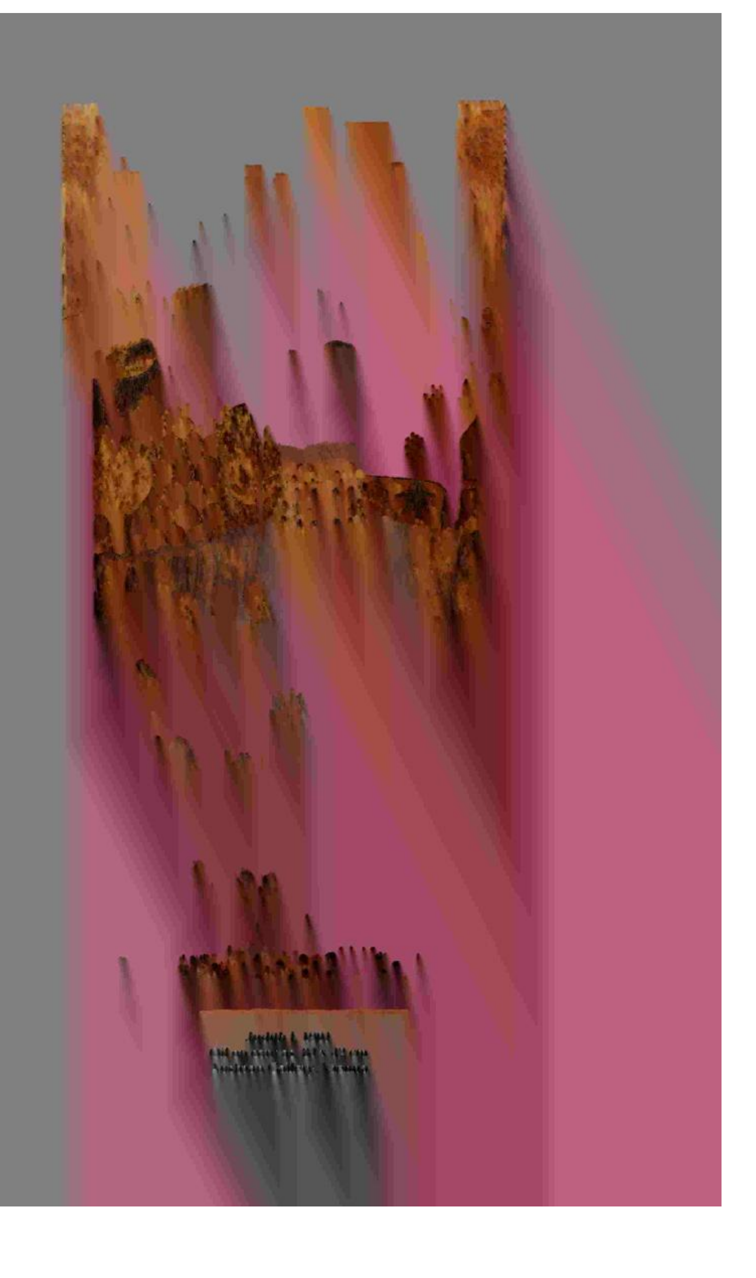




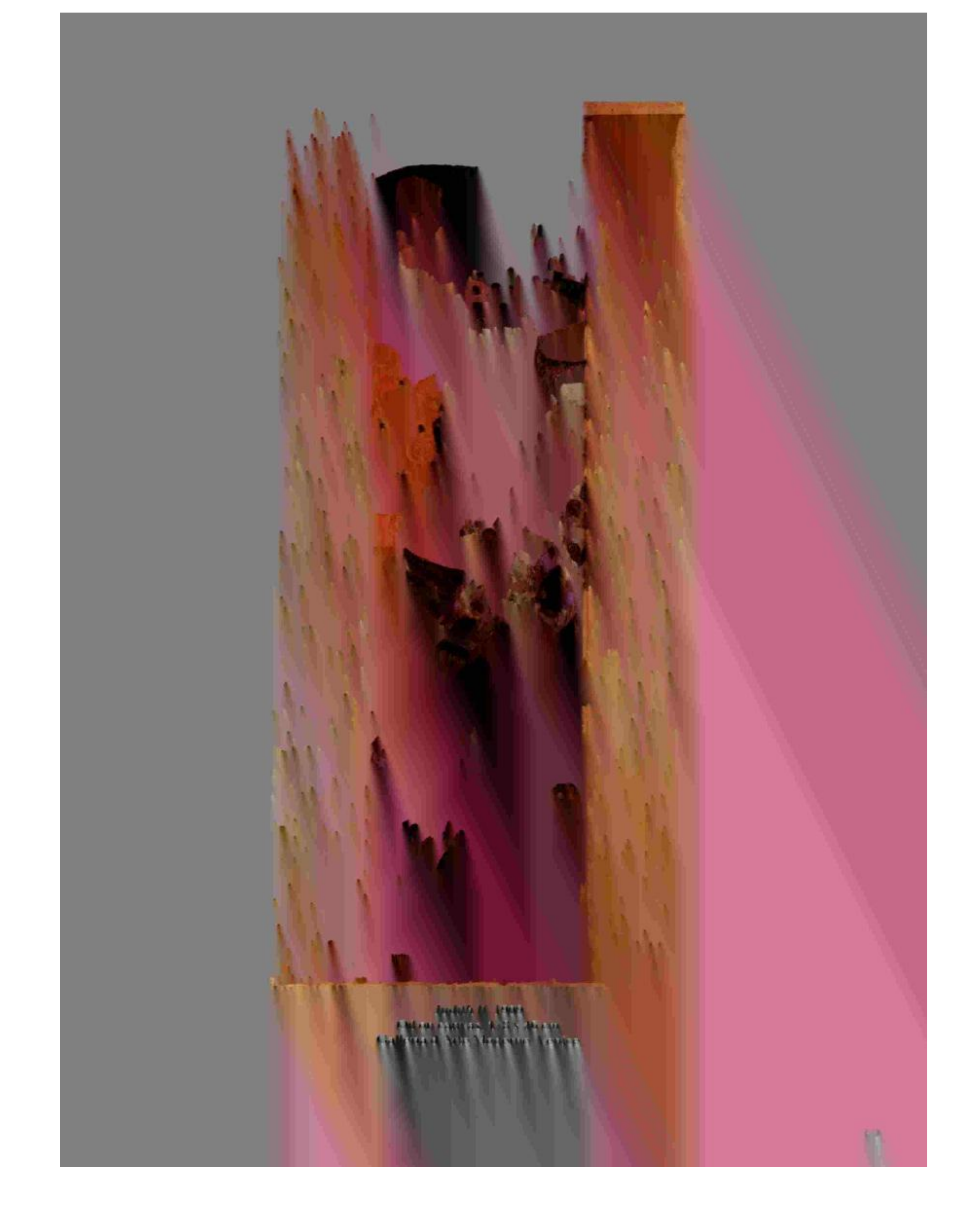


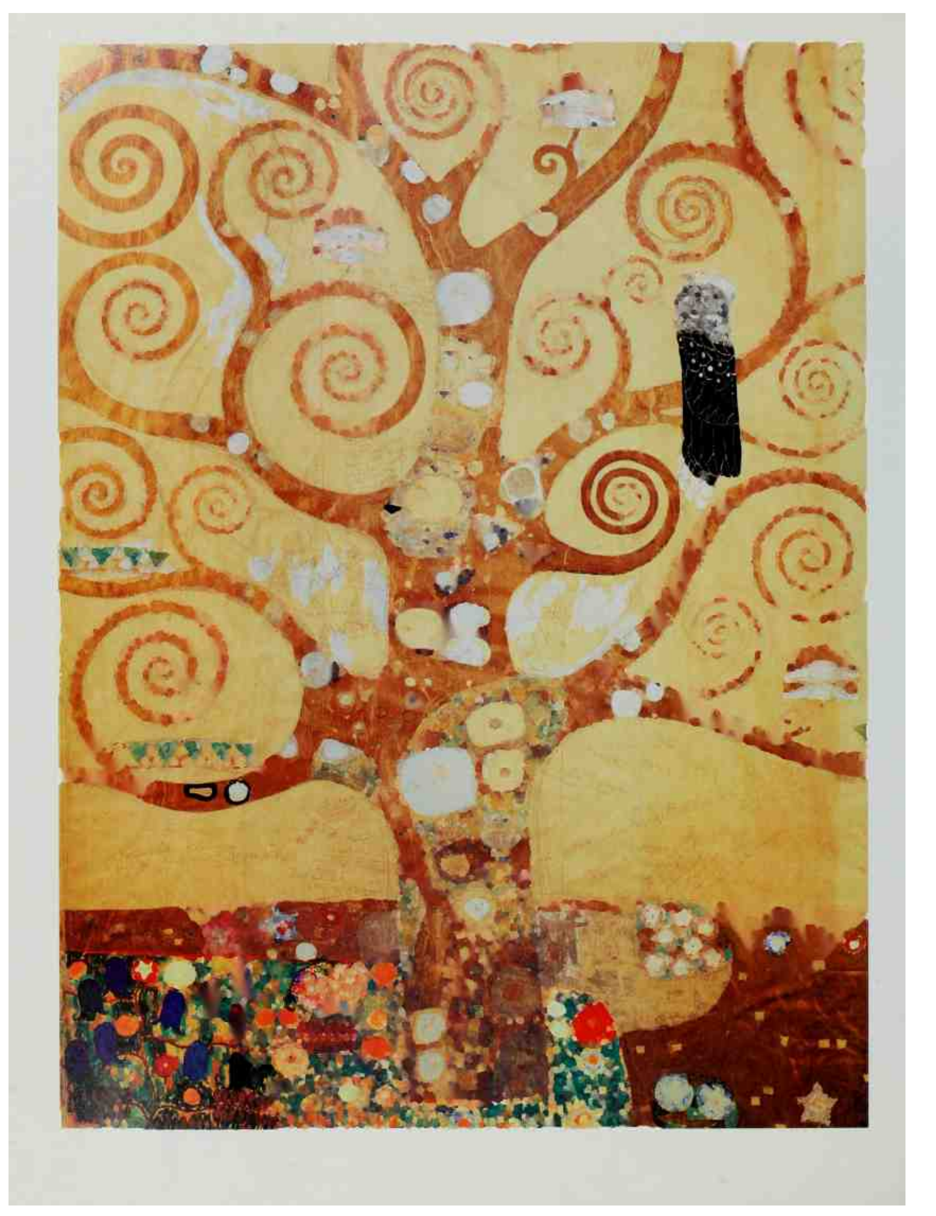


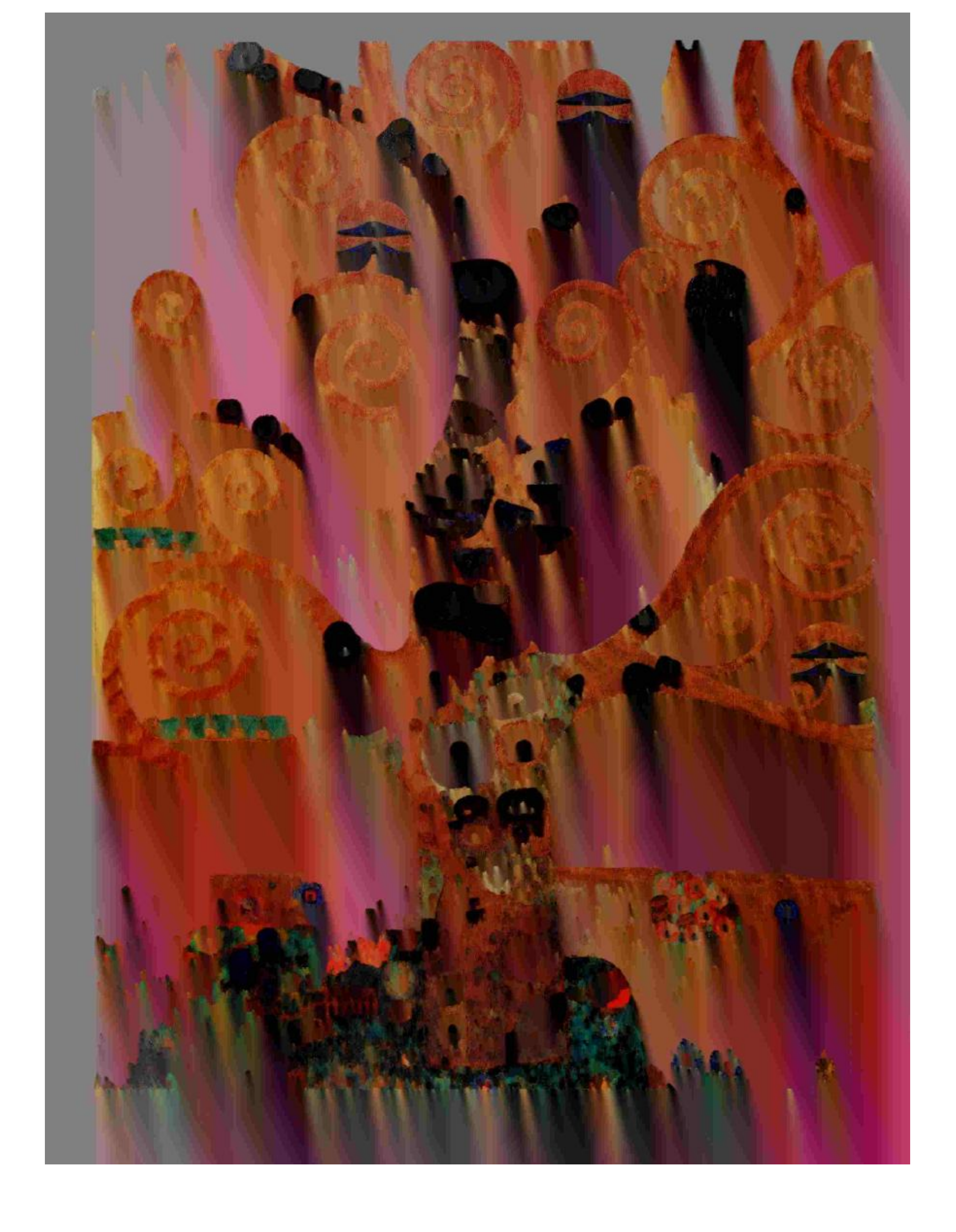

HOLOFERNES

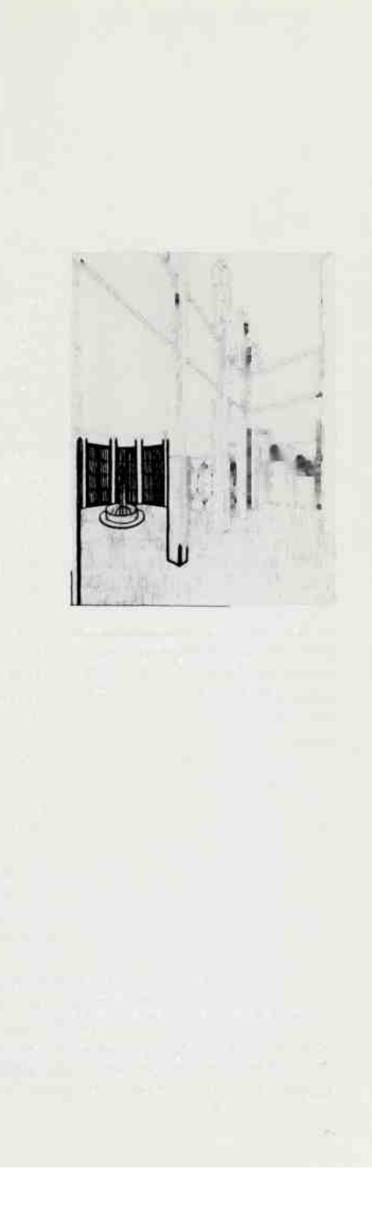




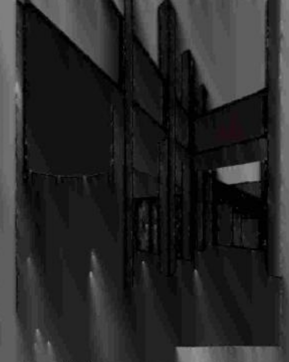




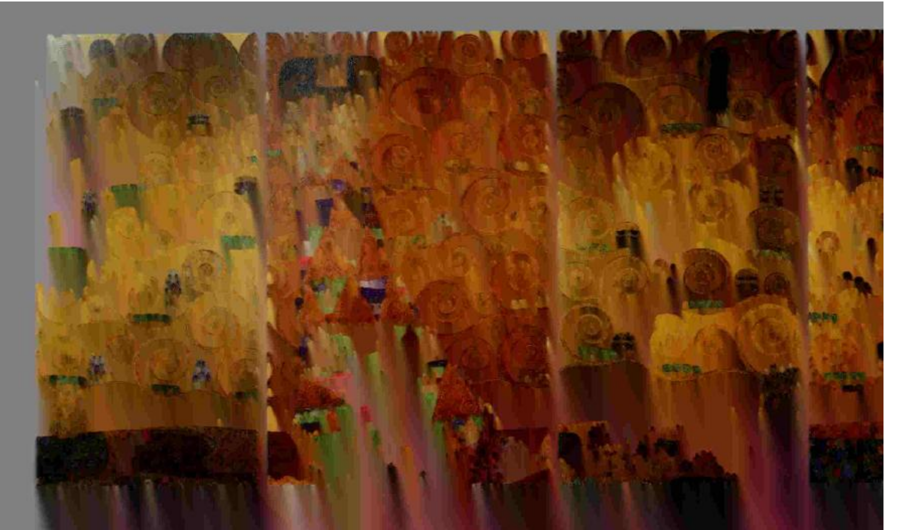




The Stoclet Frieze







were driven by no external constraints or instructions as to cultural and political context.

Paradoxically, the philosophical keynote which they endeavoured to follow in their public work and their exhibitions only ever found fulfilment with the Belgian private sponsor, far away from Vienna. We do not know very much about the conditions under which the palace was built or indeed the conditions under which Klimt's work on the frieze was done. Even the most important dates of the planning and completion are uncertain. In 1904 Josef Hoffmann probably made the first drafts of the building, and it is likely that Klimt's first visit to Brussels was in 1906. The drafts may have been completed in 1906–07, and the frieze itself in 1911.

The figures in the *Stoclet Frieze* are very close – both temporally and stylistically – to the couple in *The Kiss*. However, the frieze is considerably more ornamental than the painting. If it were not for their colourful garments, the two people – who are highly two-dimensional – would merge completely with the ornamental background. The distinction between the figures and the background is blurred even further by the actual material. Unlike the *Beethoven Frieze*, Klimt only used the most precious materials that were available, such as marble, copper, gold, semi-precious stones, lacquers and enamels. The background and the figures are almost indistinguishable, as they consist of the same material. This impression is further enhanced by the two-dimensional nature of the design. It is impossible to make any spatial distinction between foreground and background. The figures are the background, and vice versa. The only way of distinguishing between a figure and the ornamental tree of life is by the actual patterns – the

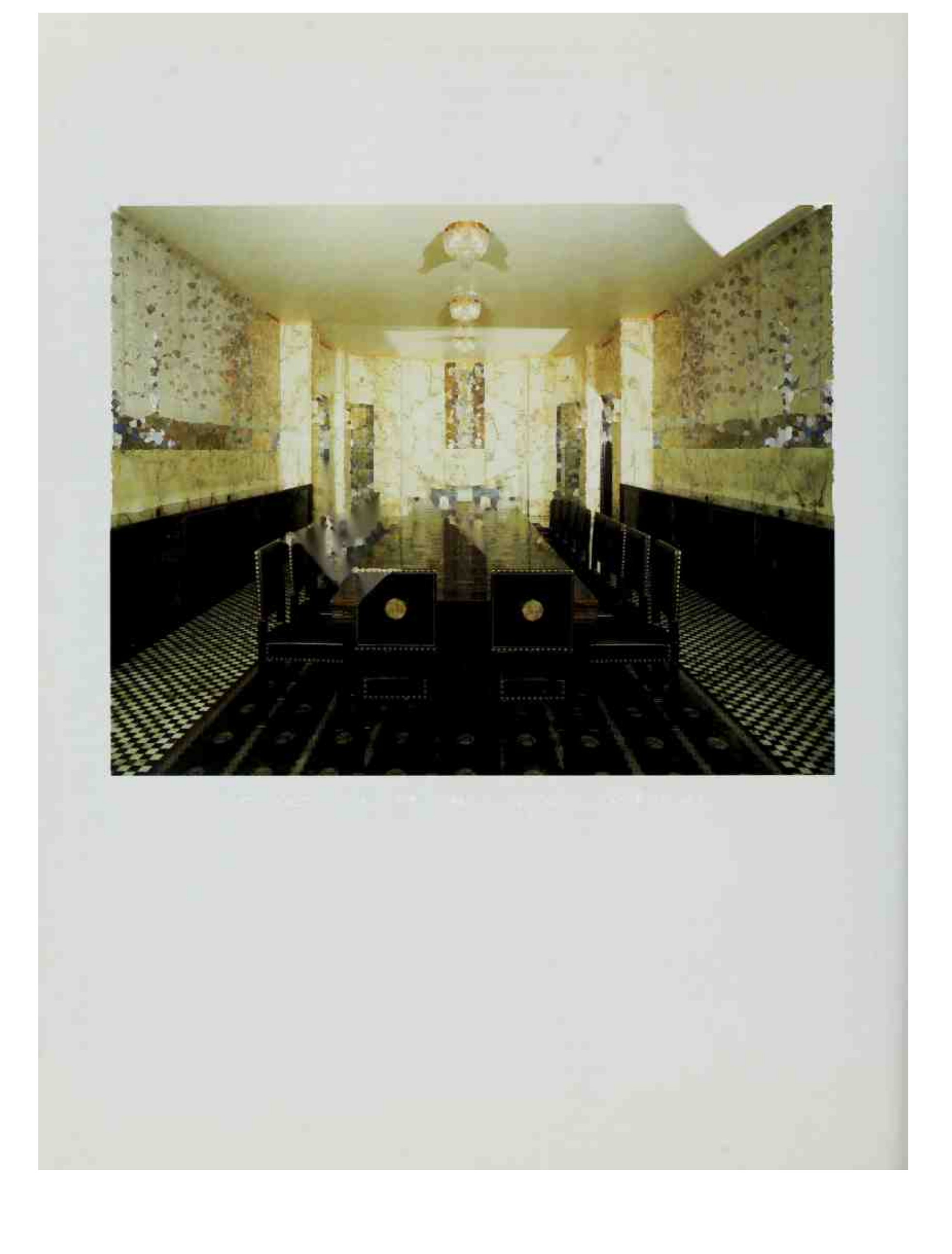
Drawings for the Stoclet Frieze, around 1905–11, Tempera, watercolour, gold paint, silver bronze, chalk, pencil and opaque white on paper.
1. [illegible], 195 x [illegible] cm.
2. Expectation, 193 x [illegible] cm.
3. [illegible], 195 x [illegible] cm.

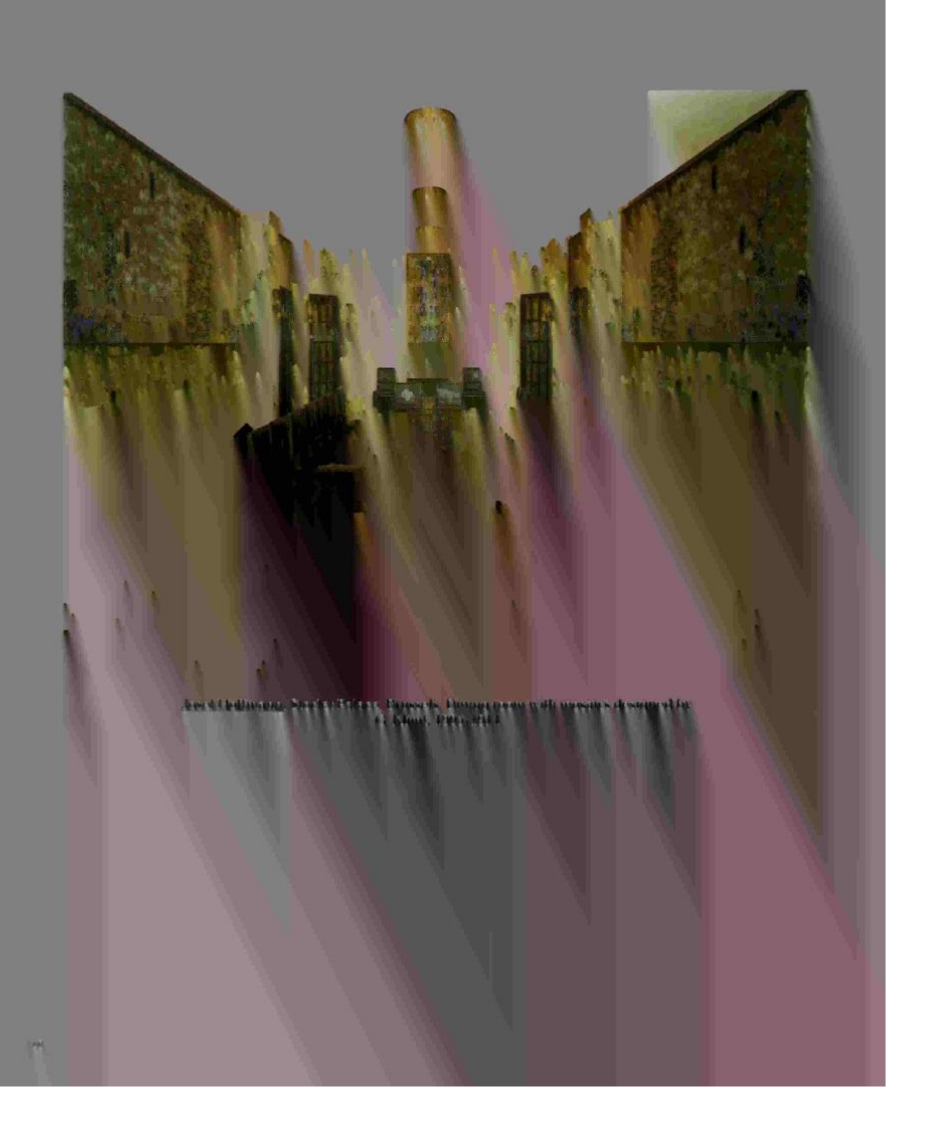








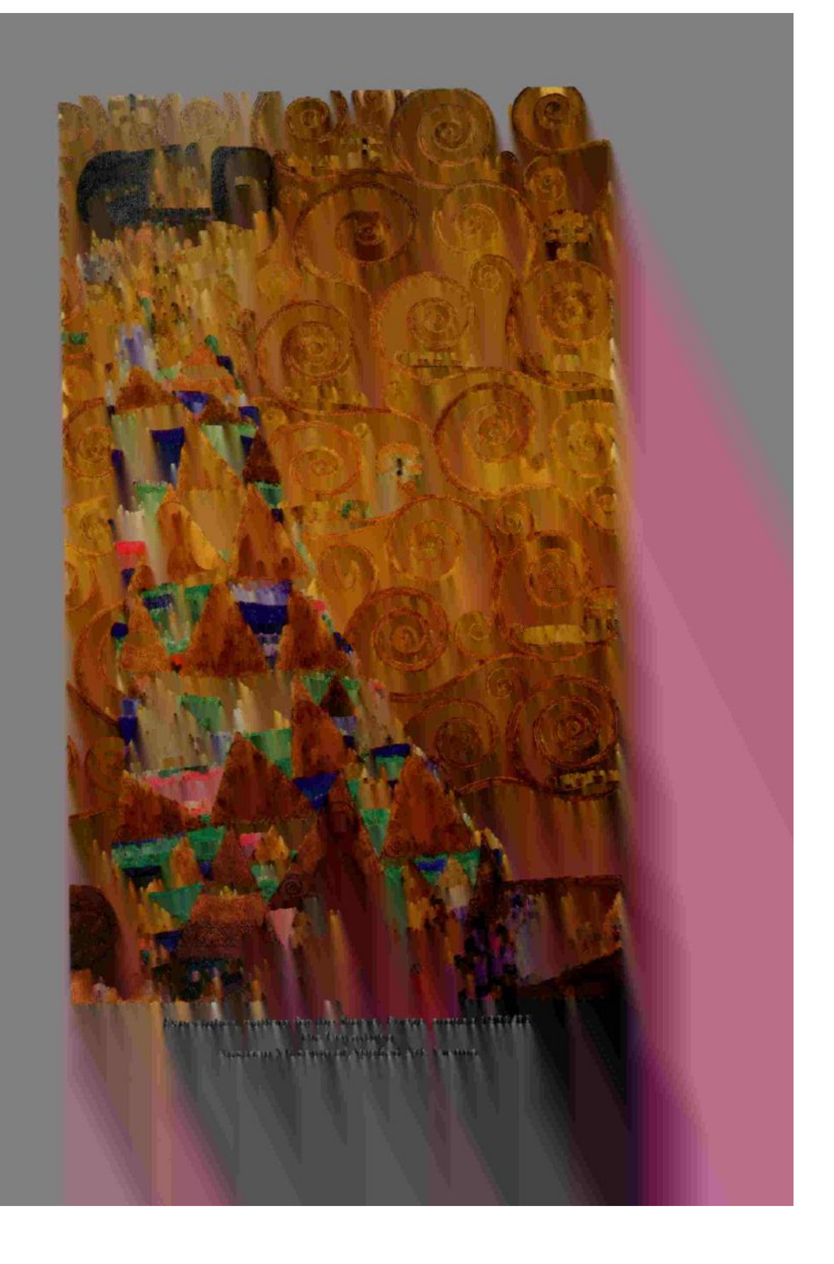




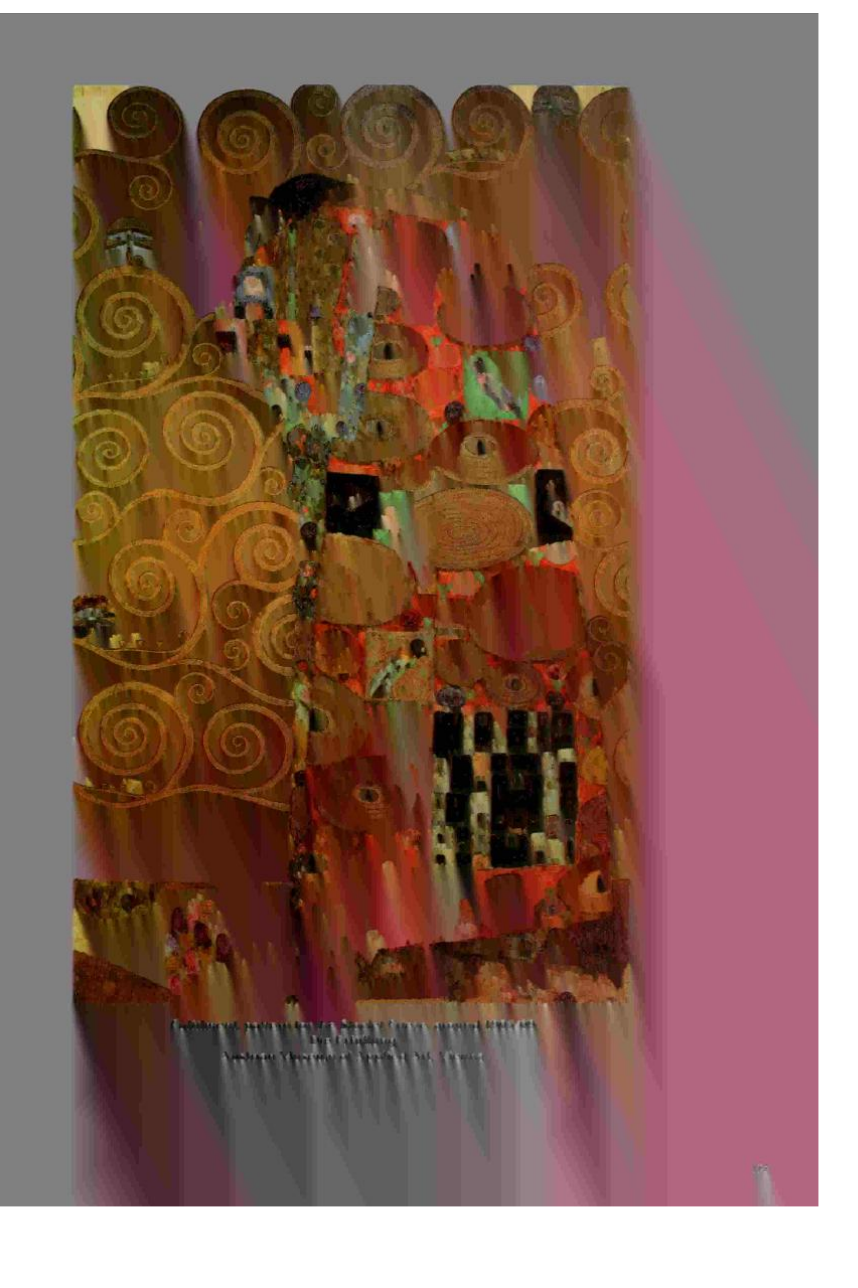


Pattern for the *Stoclet Frieze*, around 1905/06
End wall
Austrian Museum of Applied Art, Vienna

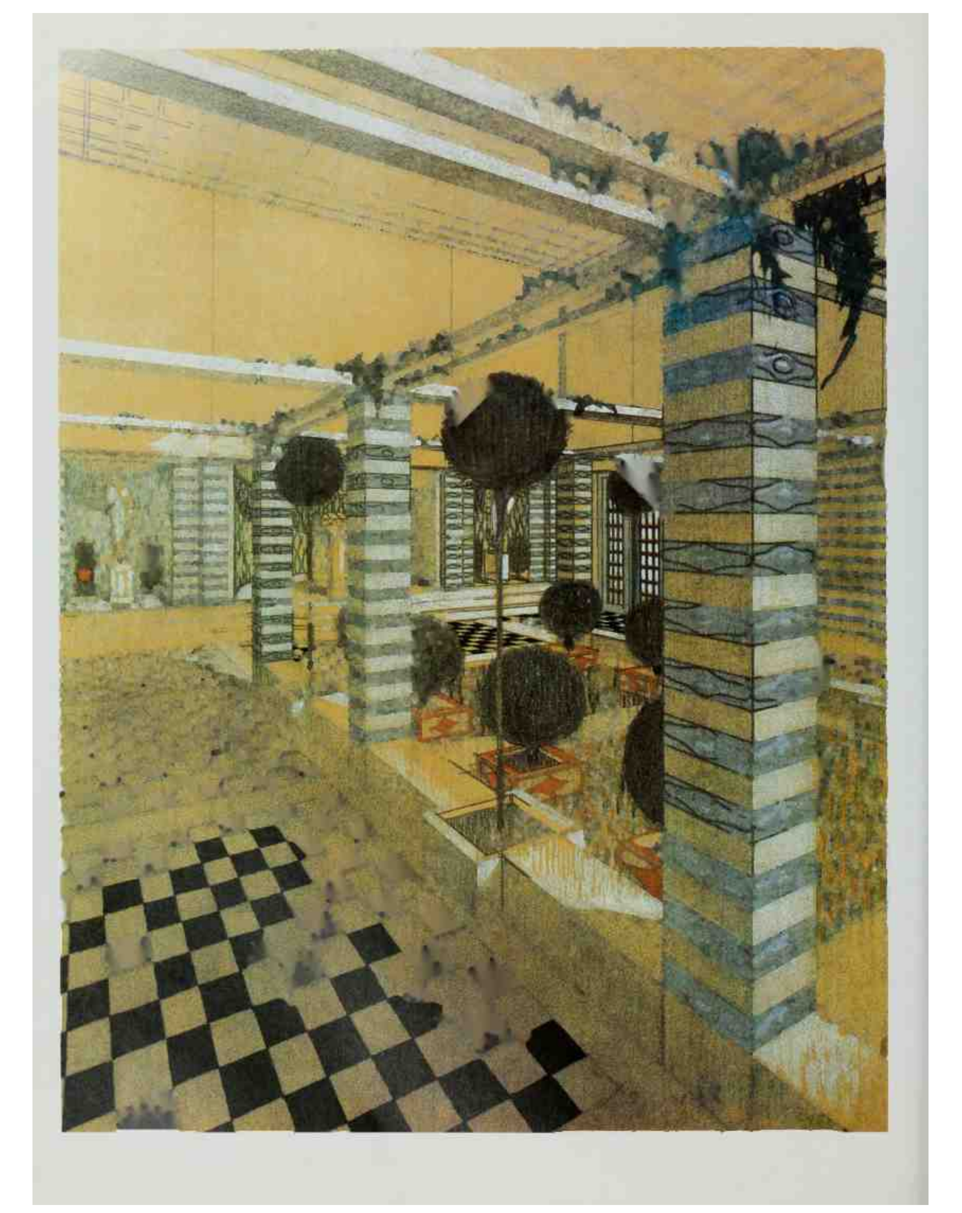


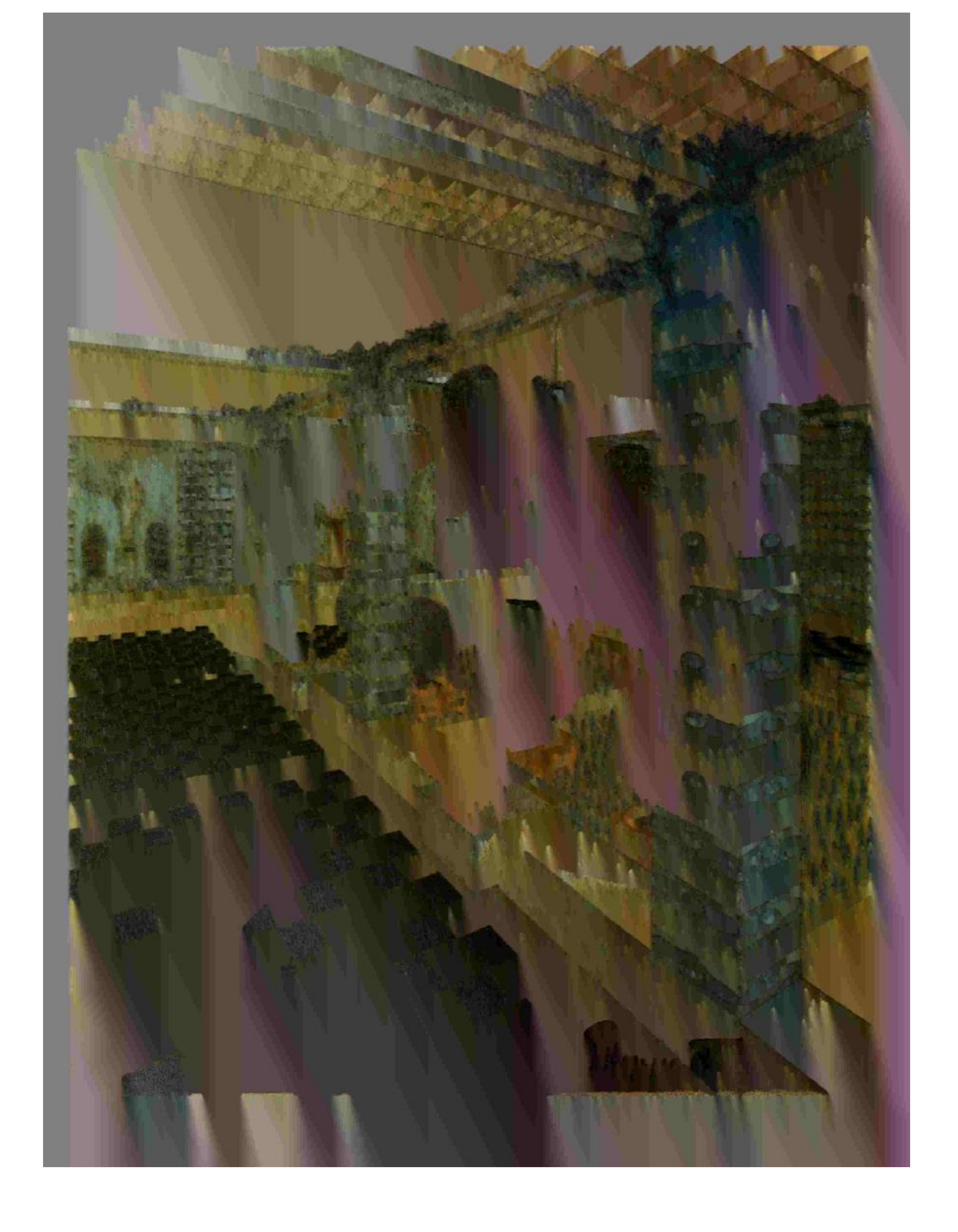


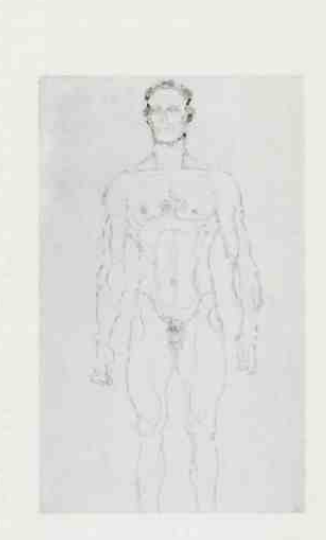




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Die Erfüllung
Austrian Museum of Applied Art, Vienna







The Break-Up of the Secession and the 1908 Kunstschau Exhibition






WERK
STATTE
KUNSTGE
WERBE
NEUSTIFT
GASSE 32

not limit their activities exclusively to the organization of temporary exhibitions. Instead, they should endeavour to extend their influence to more and more areas of modern life. Indeed they are obliged to make use of any opportunity which offers itself in order to promote the idea of art in the broadest possible sense. Through their art they must convince increasingly wider sections of the population that no life is ever too rich to be enriched by art and that there is no area too [illegible] for art to find room in it.

“As our endeavours met with resistance and a lack of understanding among the majority of the association and as many of these endeavours could not even be attempted within such a narrow framework, we felt compelled to leave the association. This step was further corroborated by our recognition that most of our colleagues had no confidence in the sincerity of our intentions, nor were they able to show any sympathy towards them.”[illegible]

The 1908 Kunstschau exhibition was the debut of the new Artists' Association, now often referred to as the “Klimt Group”. Also, it was the ambitious attempt to put their demands into practice — demands that could quite easily be understood as a renewed affirmation of the old Secessionist claims. The dimensions of the exhibition went beyond those of the Secession itself. Rather than a simple, self-contained exhibition and an intimate setting within a single room, reserved specially for the worship of art, it aimed at expanding the whole project to include a small microcosm. Designed by Josef Hoffmann, the entire complex included a variety of different sections with numerous provisional buildings which were only intended for the duration of the exhibition and would soon be demolished again. More conspicuously than any of the Secession exhibitions, a group of artists was demonstrating the artistic articulation of “the whole” of life. Indeed the exhibition itself could be read as a metaphor of the “whole city” and its society. The exhibition quite clearly reflected the advice of the Viennese Workshop, which also participated in it. Indeed, both groups were modelled on the organizational concept of cooperative work as evolved by the Artists' Association.

It is worth noting that the Kunstschau adorned itself with the same motto with which the Secession had announced its debut on the inscription on its exhibition building: “To every time its art and to art its freedom”. However, it had spread not only to the Viennese Workshop and the School of Applied Art but also to new artistic currents. Not only “Stylists” were represented but also artists like Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. Even Ludwig Hevesi, usually a herald of favourable publicity for the Secession, simply described Kokoschka as a “top savage”. The public appearance of these artists soon involved the newly formed group of ex-Secessionists in more scandals. However, they also heralded a new generation of Viennese Modernism whose expressionist leanings were diametrically opposed to the aesthetic harmony of the Stylists.

“The Kunstschau”, wrote Joseph August Lux, “is meant to be an image of life, or rather a pure dream image of life as the artist would like to see it fashioned. A universal building in which a parable of the



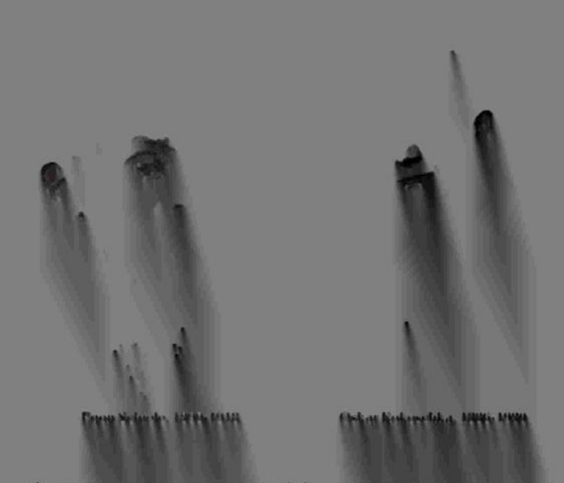
Viennese Workshop, postcard, 1908, [illegible]



KUNST
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1908





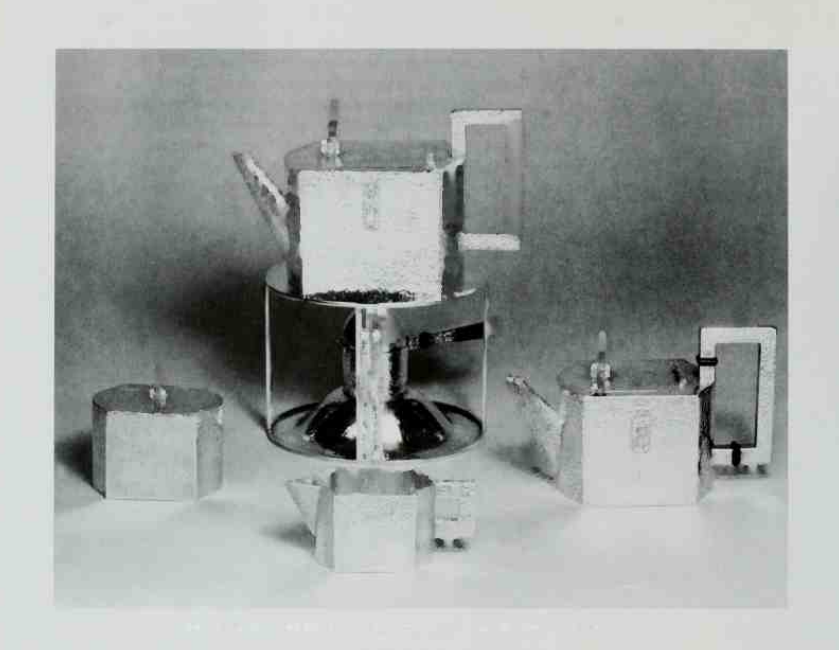



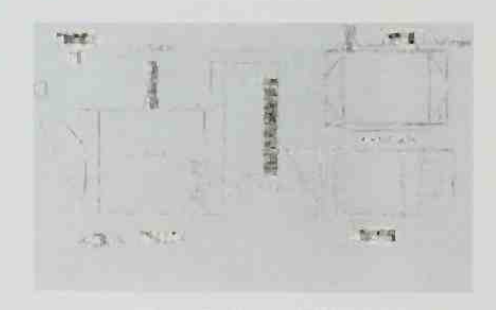
Egon Schiele, 1890-1918 Oskar Kokoschka, 1886-1980

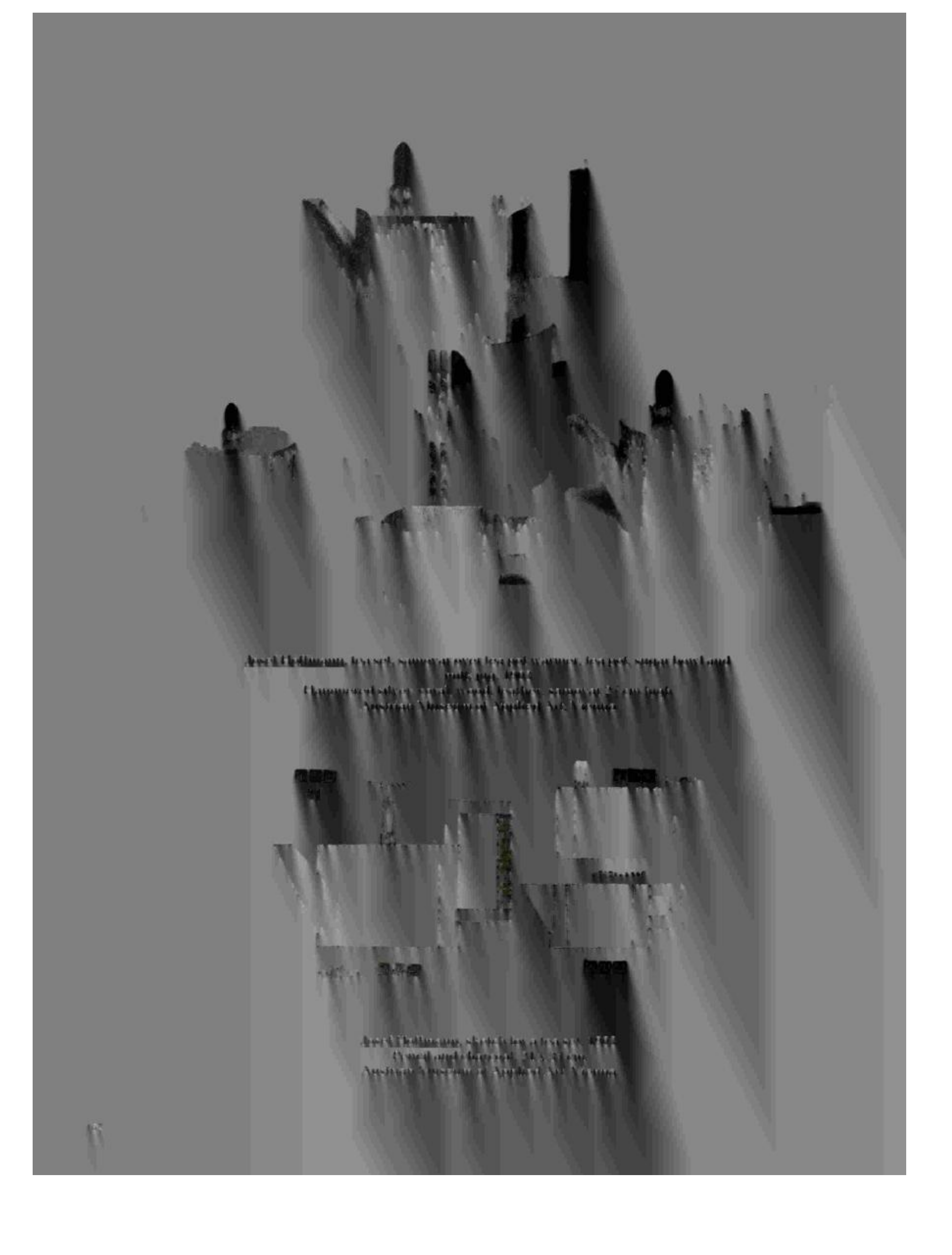
the purity of its convictions. And the attempts of our adversaries to declare this modern art movement dead and to fight against us are therefore completely in vain, for such a fight goes against the whole principle of growth — and indeed against life itself. Having worked on this exhibition for weeks, we will part again and go on separate ways as soon as it has been opened. But maybe, in the near future, we shall get together in completely different groups and for different purposes. Whatever the case may be, we [illegible] and I would like to thank all those who have been working on this exhibition: [illegible] colleagues [illegible] and [illegible]. But I would also like to thank all our patrons and sponsors who enabled us to hold this exhibition, and [illegible] to take a good look at the exhibition. I now declare the 1908 Viennese Kunstschau open."[37]

The programme that was set forth in this speech did not differ substantially from that of the Secession or the Viennese Workshop. [illegible] that [illegible] and [illegible] all spheres of life [illegible] that art and [illegible] on the same level, as were fine art and [illegible]. Nor was there anything new in their ethical and political views on the aesthetic refinement of life, views which also implied a [illegible] aesthetic elitism. After all, in the final analysis, both Klimt's works and those of, say, the Viennese Workshop were only affordable for the well-to-do, and these "aesthetic circles" could only be [illegible] by a small group of [illegible] people within the upper middle classes who took an interest in developments in modern art.

What Klimt did not express directly in his speech was the [illegible] of the [illegible] with the political [illegible] of the



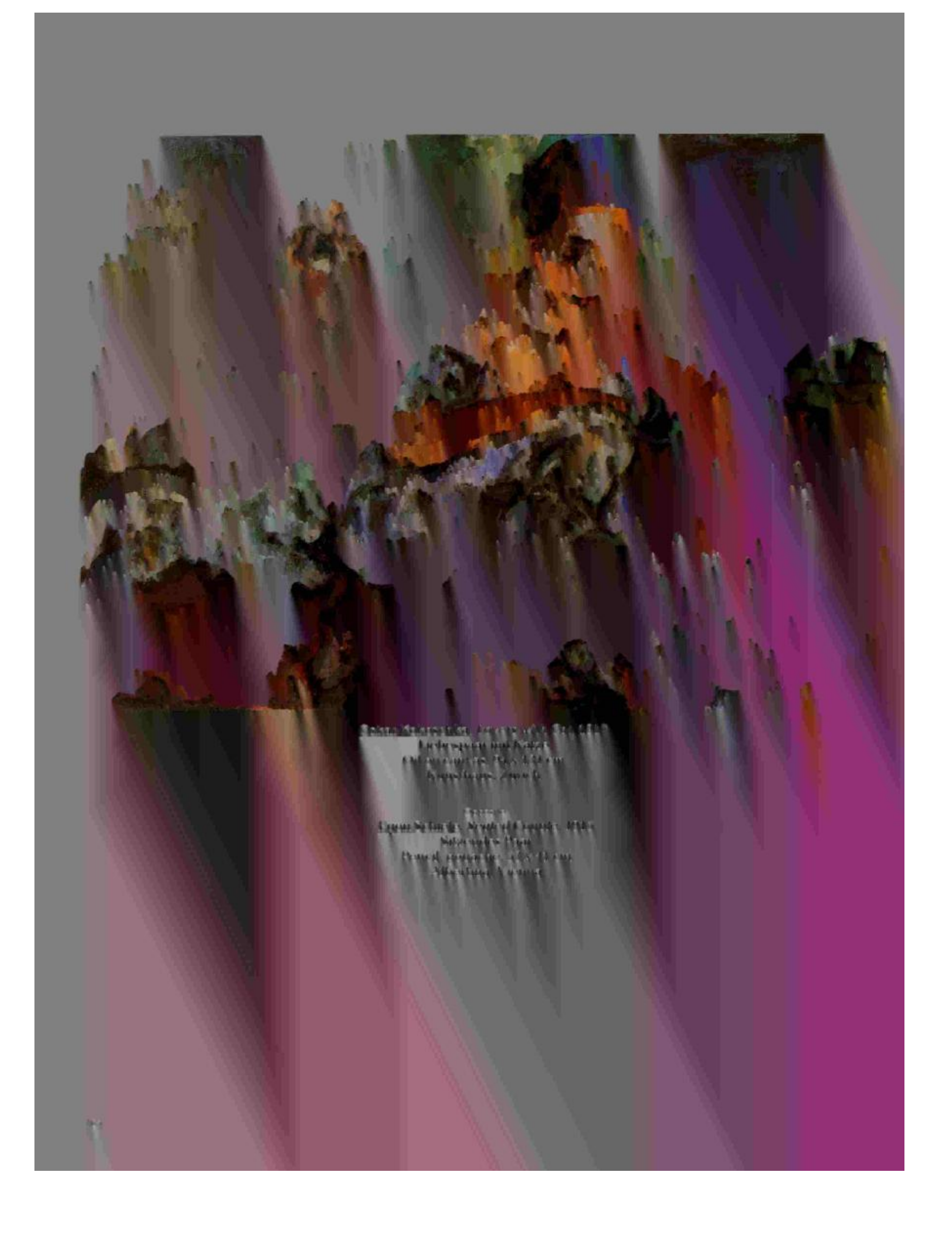




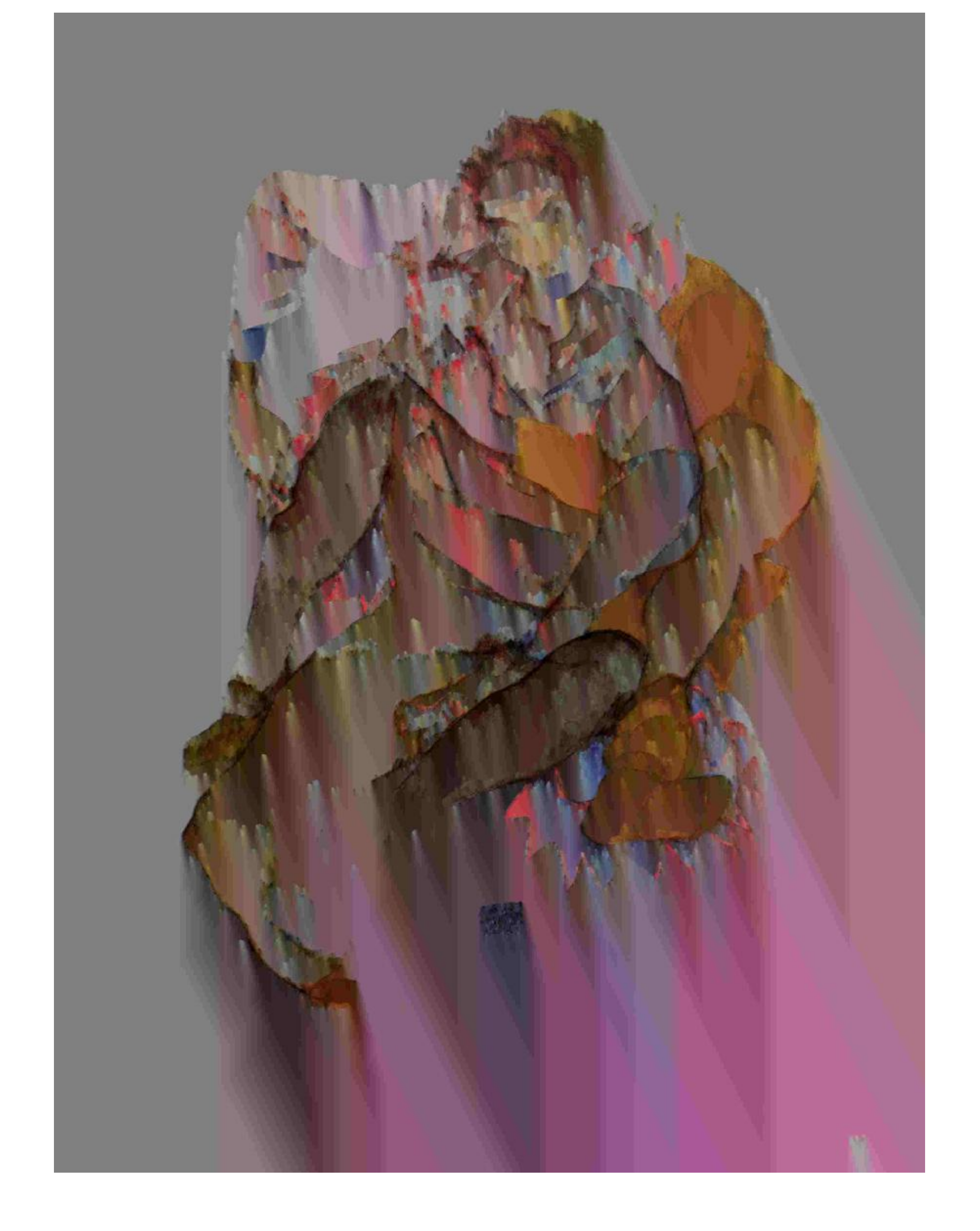


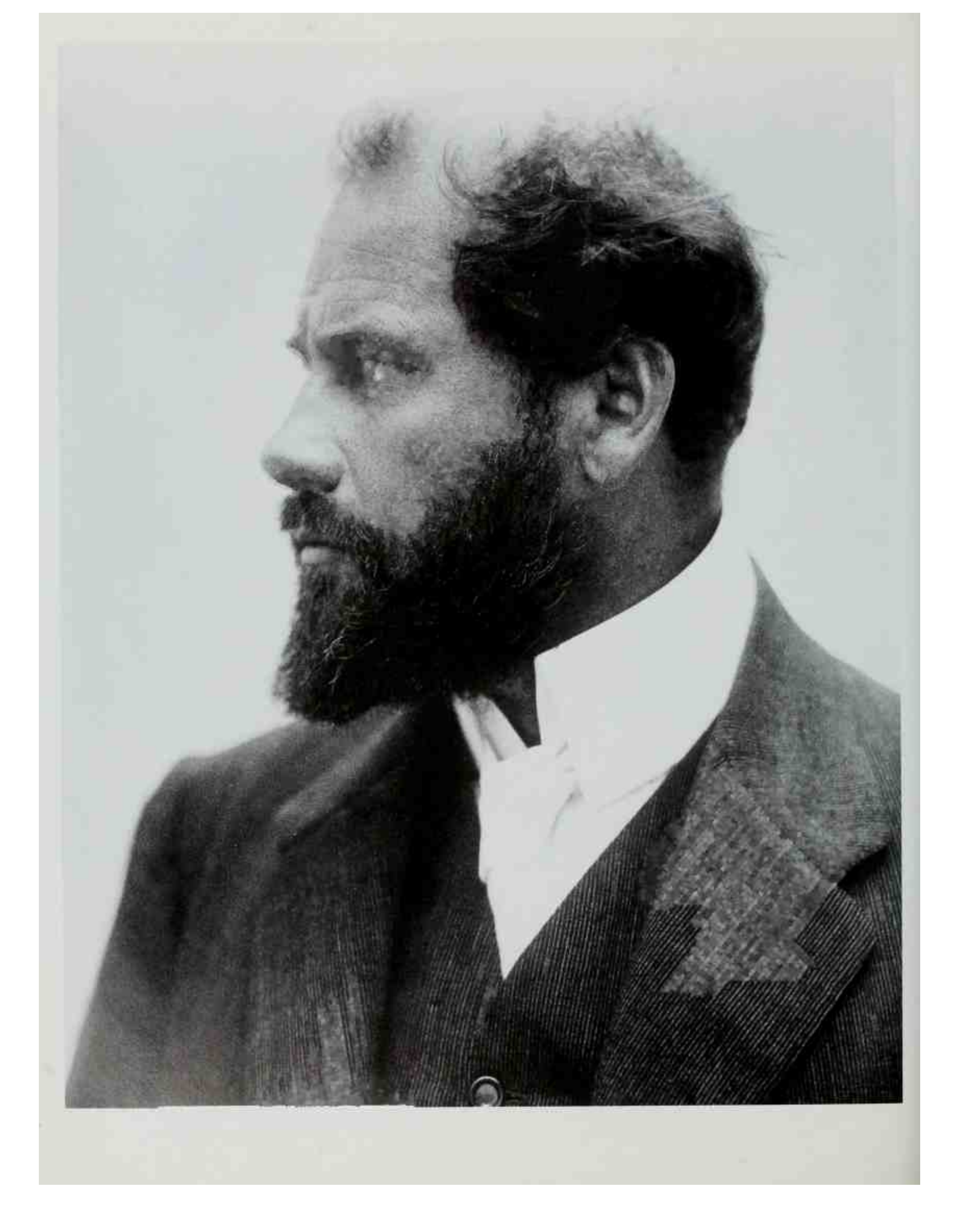


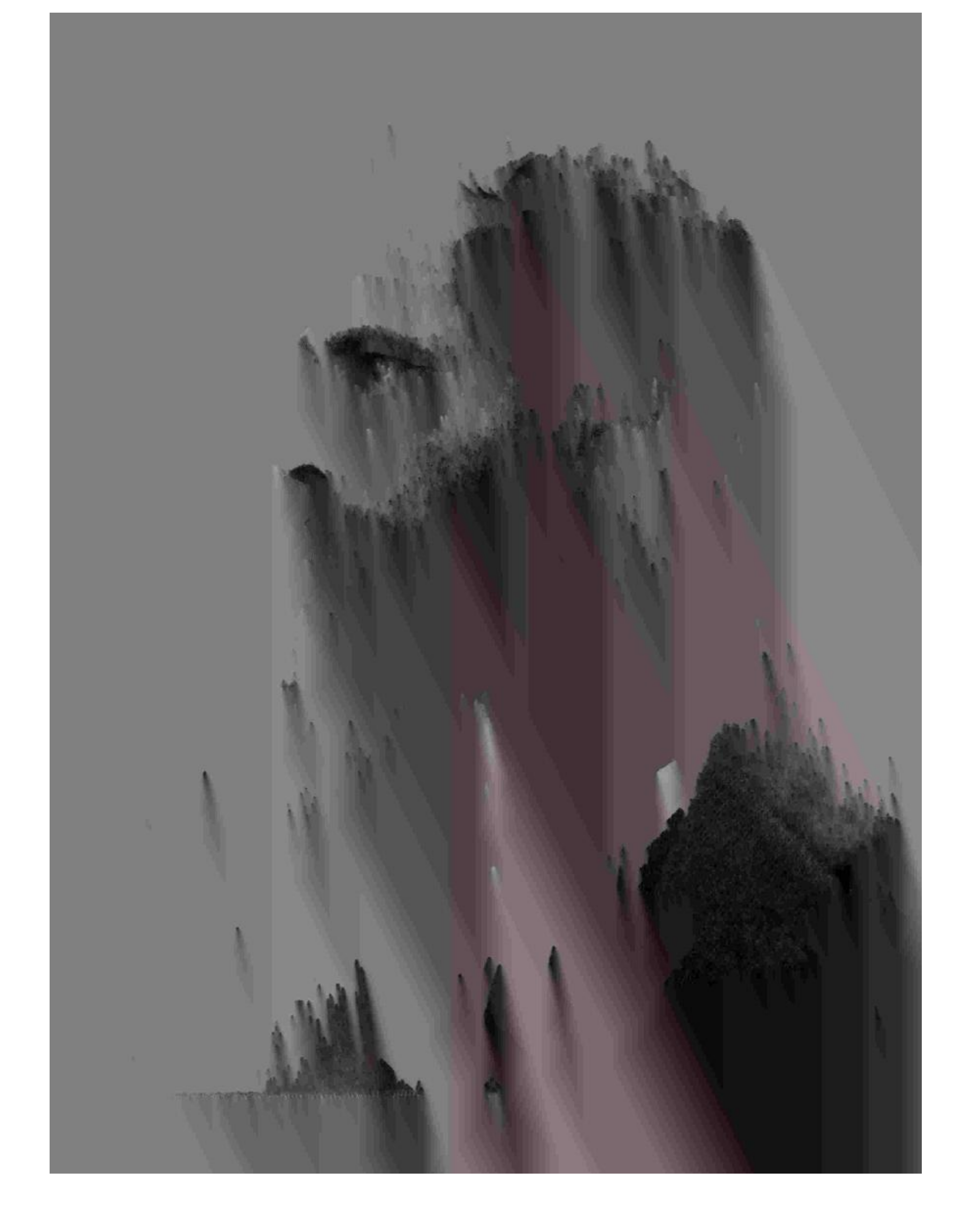










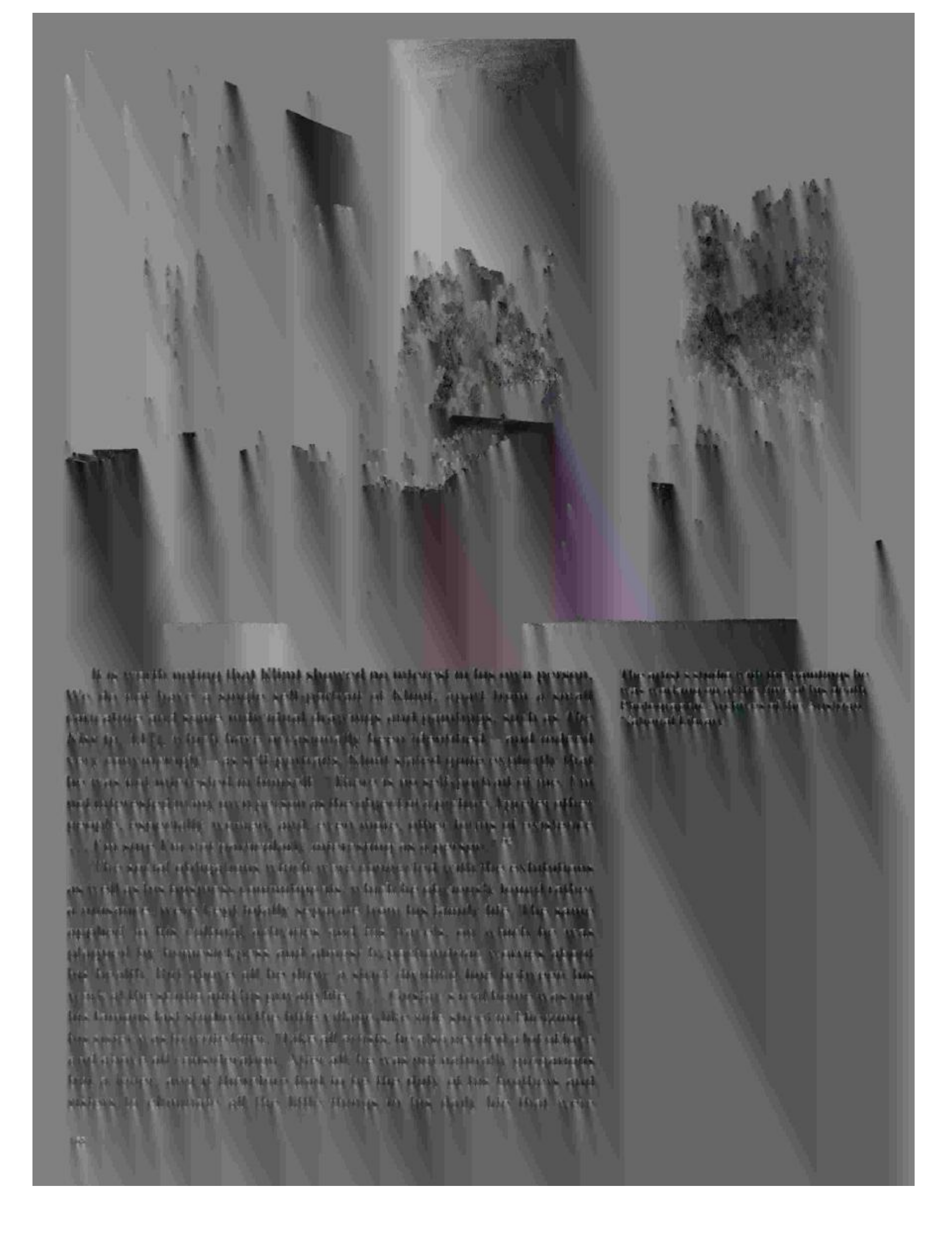




"I'm not particularly interesting."



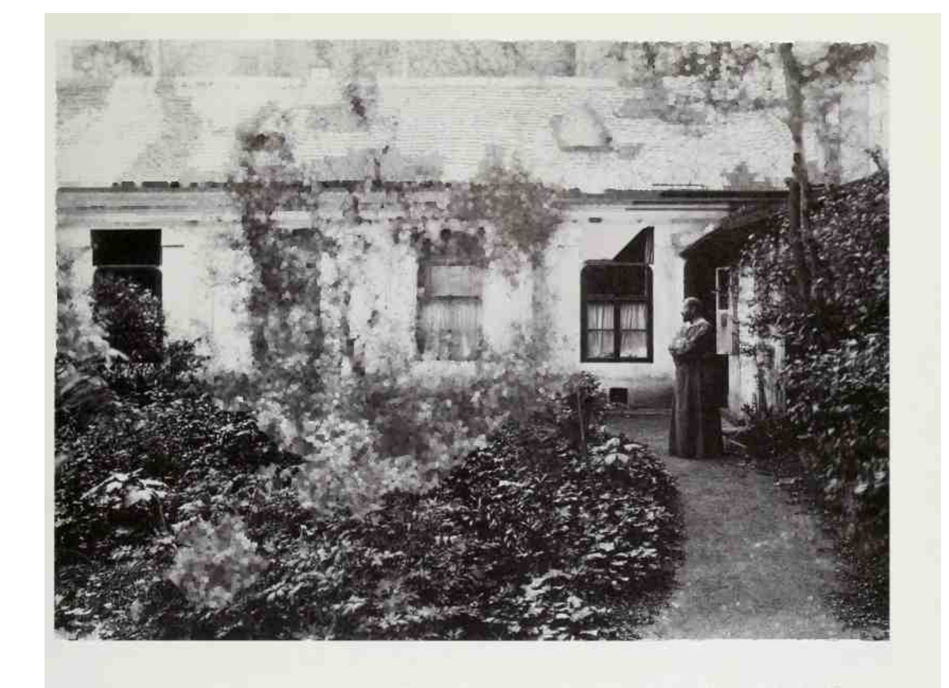


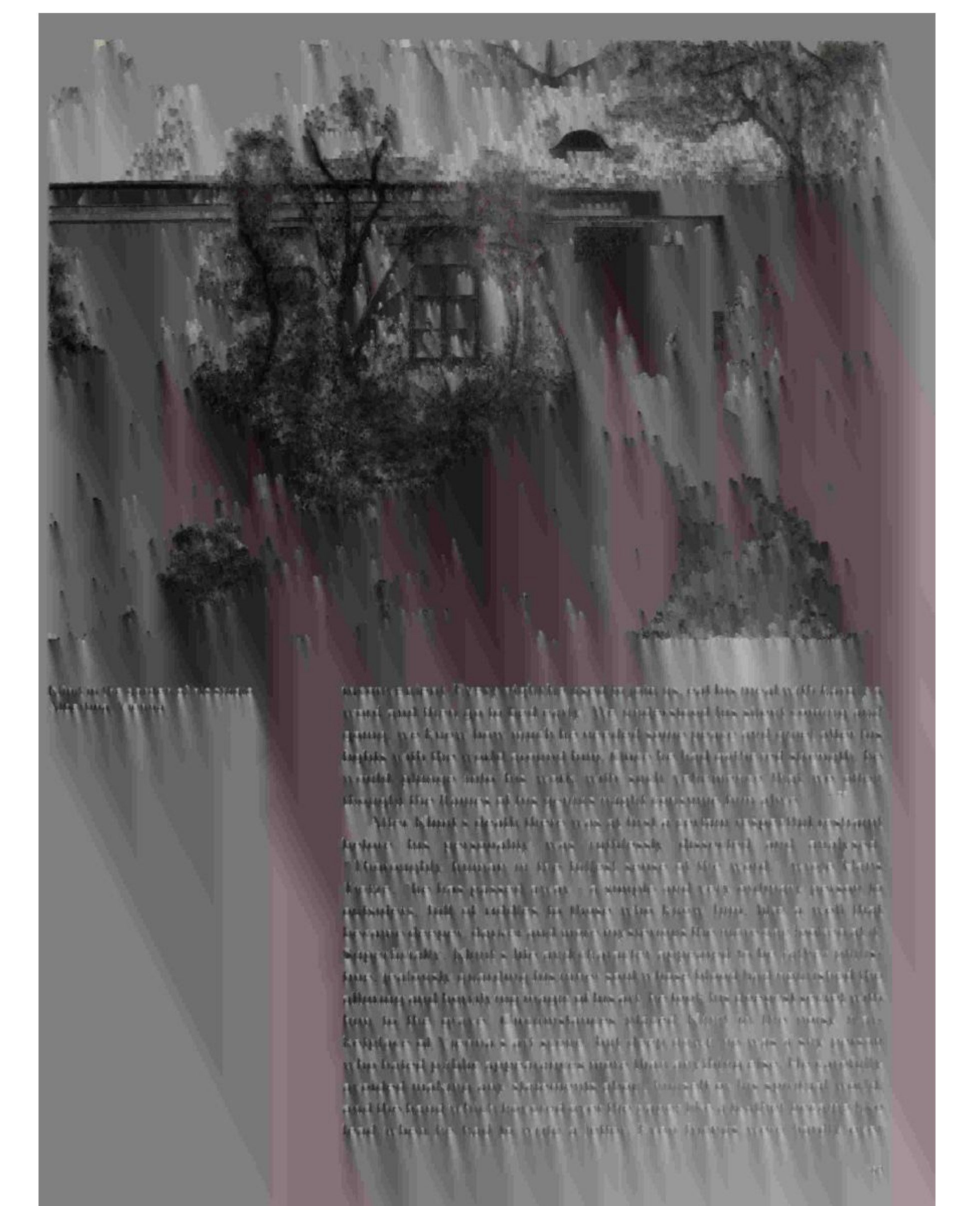


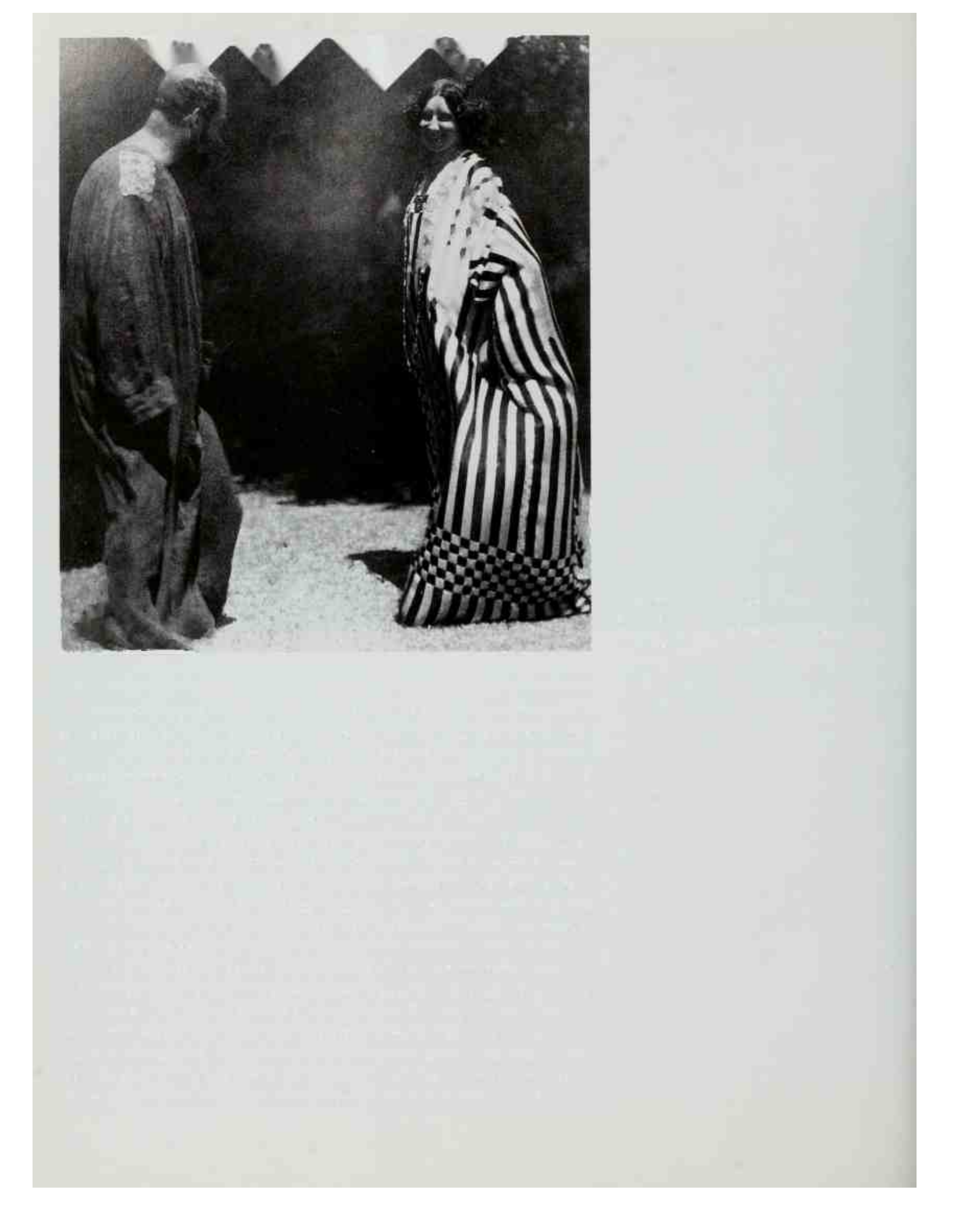
[illegible]

It is worth noting that Klimt showed no interest in his own person. We do not have a single self-portrait of Klimt, apart from a small caricature and some individual drawings and paintings, such as The Kiss (p. 117), which have occasionally been identified – and indeed very convincingly – as self-portraits. Klimt stated quite explicitly that he was not interested in himself: "There is no self-portrait of me. I am not interested in my own person as the subject of a picture, I prefer other people, especially women, and, even more, other forms of existence ... I'm sure I'm not particularly interesting as a person." [illegible]

The social obligations which were connected with the exhibitions as well as his business commitments, which he obviously found rather a nuisance, were kept totally separate from his family life. The same applied to his cultural activities and his travels, on which he was plagued by homesickness and almost hypochondriac worries about his health. But above all he drew a sharp dividing line between his world of the studio and his private life. [illegible]







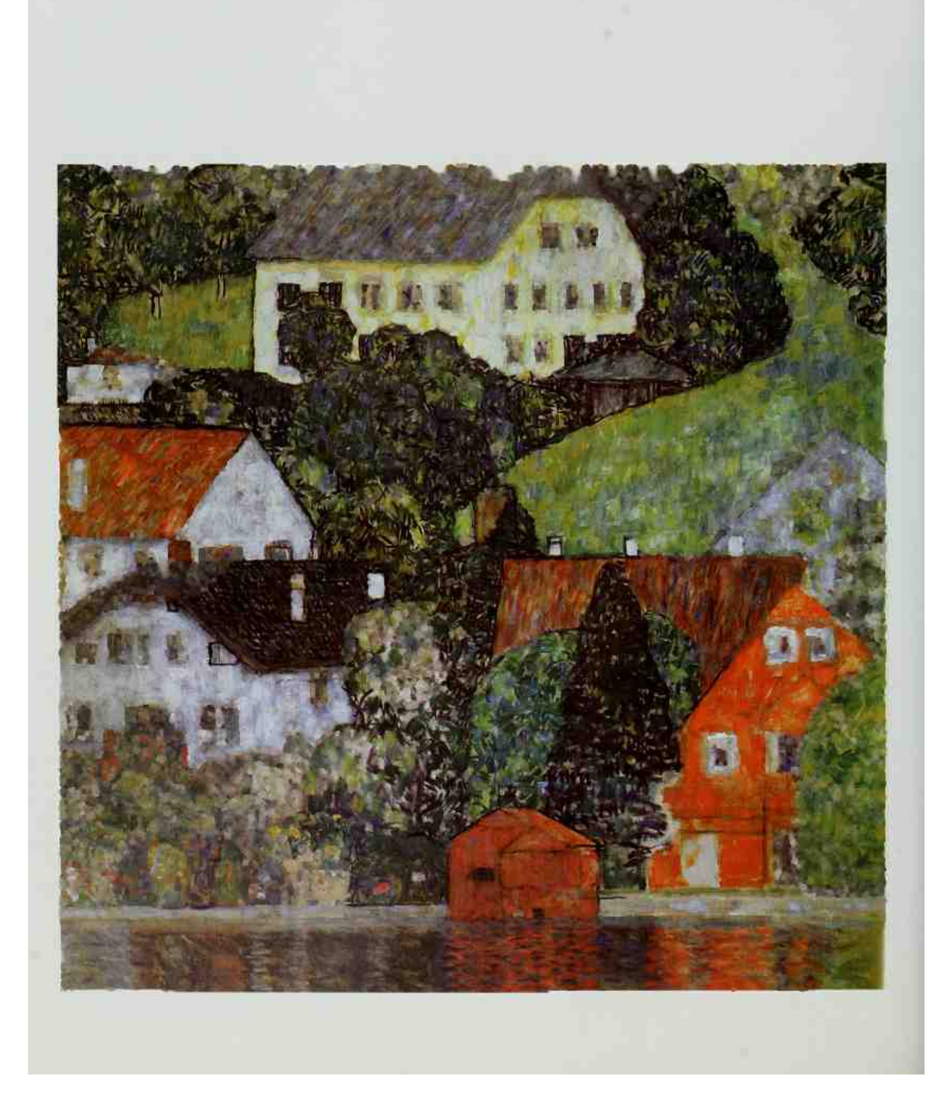


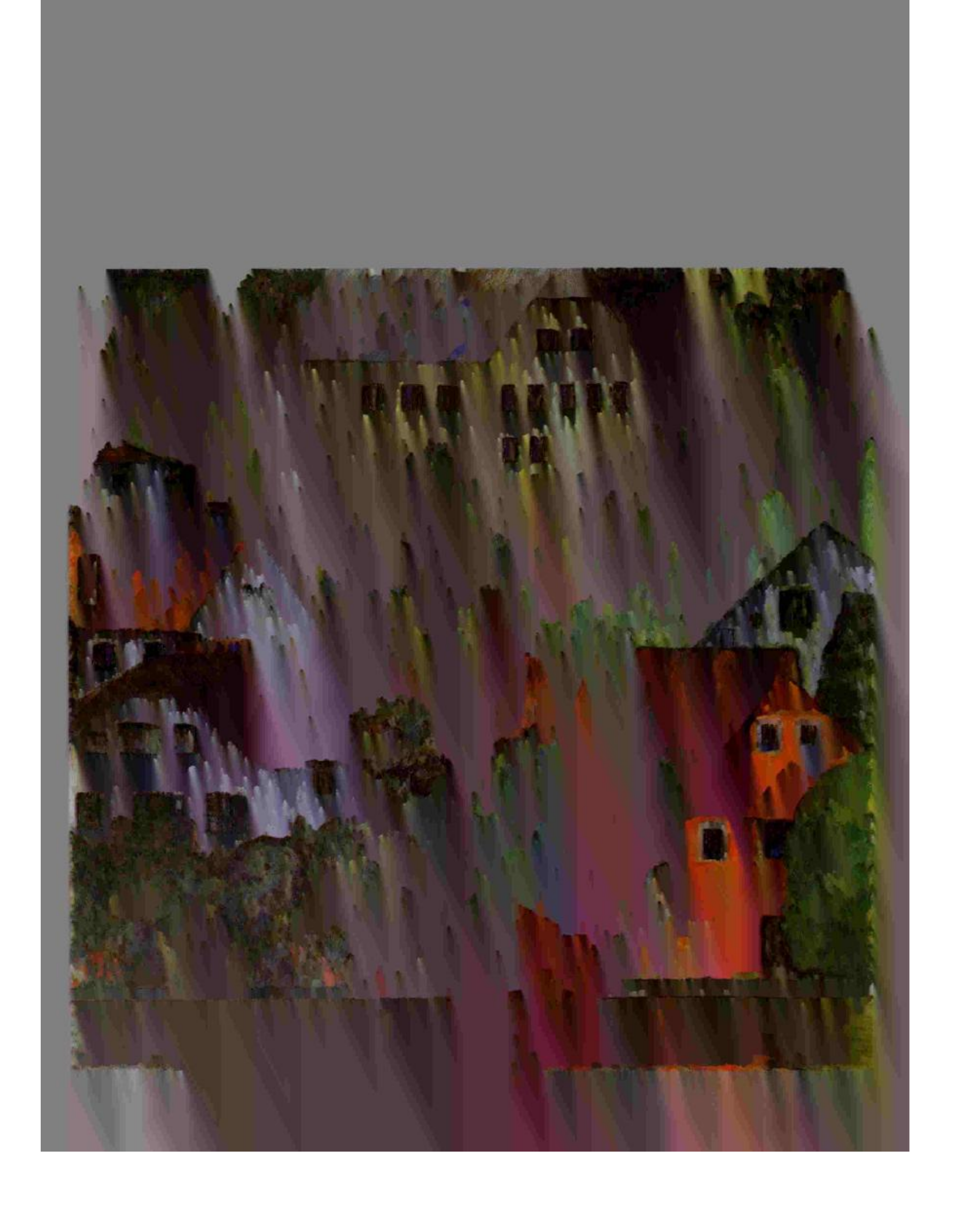
Klimt and Emilie Flöge, both in painter's smocks.
Photograph: Archives of the Austrian National Library, Vienna

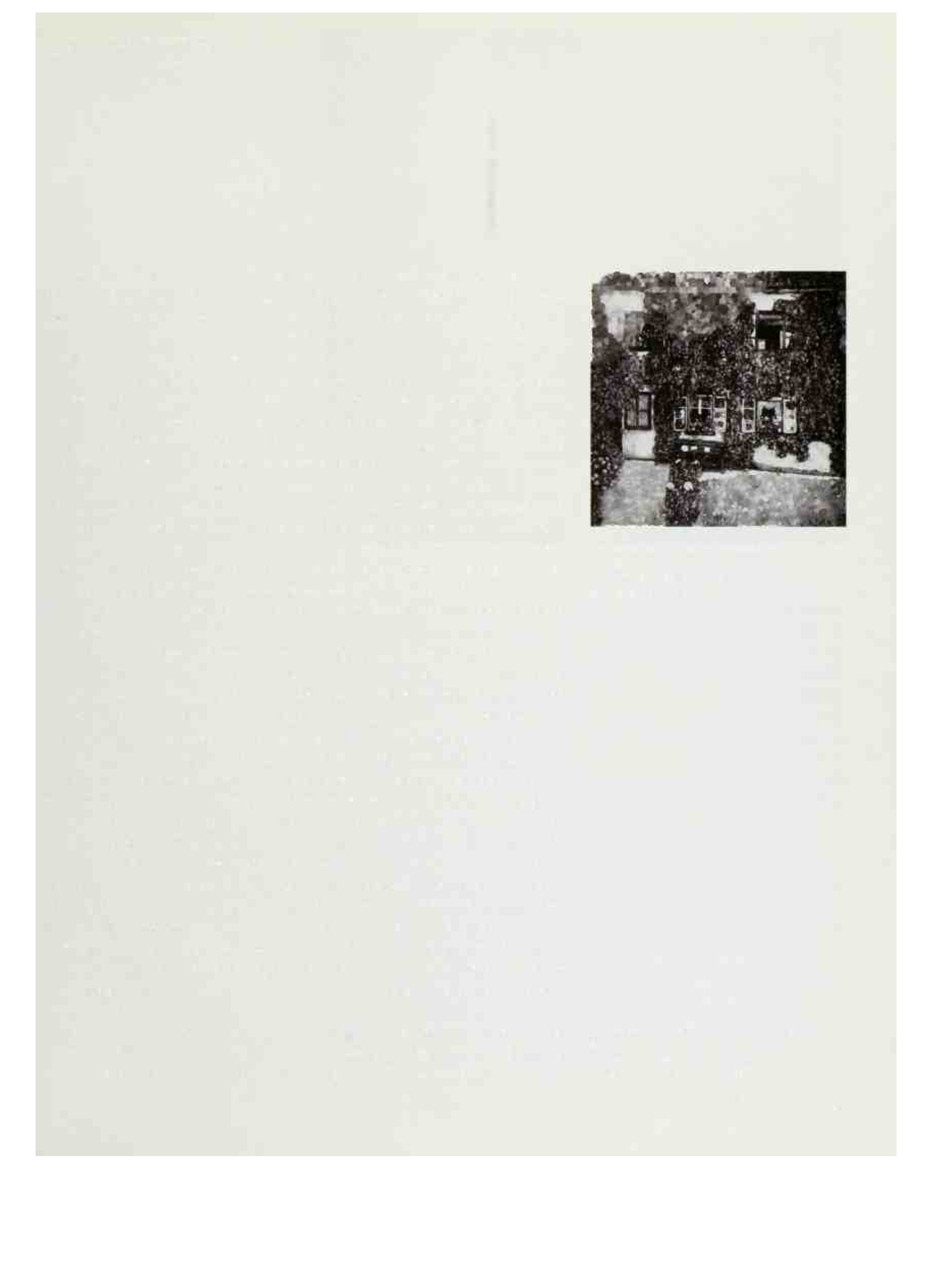
allowed a glimpse behind the wall that Klimt had erected around himself, and so these accounts and tales provide only an incomplete picture of the man. Fejes also points out that his mother and one of his sisters had been mentally ill, which was a [illegible] to him. Thus, his soul had been injured from early childhood onwards and his vital energy had been paralysed [illegible].

However, the most frequently discussed chapter in Klimt's biography is his relationship with Emilie Flöge, who has only recently been the subject of an exhibition and a book. Considering that Klimt's love life has been described as "hectic" [illegible], the world's interest in examining Klimt's relationship with his closest partner comes as no surprise.

In 1891 [illegible], Klimt's brother, Ernst Klimt, had married Helene Flöge. The marriage only lasted fifteen months, but must have had a [illegible] Klimt's life and career. Through Helene he met her sister Emilie, who [illegible] together with their [illegible]. Later, just as his large-scale commissions for the [illegible] buildings were about to dry up, this gave him access to Viennese society. His friend, the painter Carl Moll, introduced him to





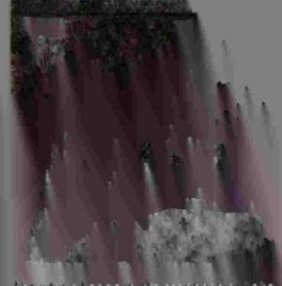


Landscapes

A large proportion of Klimt's works are landscapes. Nearly a quarter of his paintings – though virtually none of his drawings – are devoted to this subject. This lack of landscape drawings was partly due to his method of working. He worked outside and used sketch books which, except for a few, have been lost. Sometimes he did not complete his landscapes outside but took them back to his studio in Vienna, and occasionally he may have used photographs as an aid. It is worth noting that in the rest of his work – his allegorical pictures – landscapes are almost totally missing, while conversely his landscapes contain virtually no narrative elements and only very few people. They are mood landscapes and paintings of "scenes" (Kunz). Sometimes. Most of them are square, which makes them appear motionless and tranquil. In nearly all of Klimt's landscapes, this tranquility is totally undisturbed by any activity or kinetic energy. Even the diffuse, "Impressionist" direction of the light (for instance in his lake scenes) serves to emphasise the general sense of calm. The lack of kinetic energy and motion adds an element of timelessness to nearly all his landscapes.

It has often been stressed that Klimt's landscapes have an allegorical content which is similar to that of his other allegorical themes. "Melancholy is a ... distinctive feature in his landscapes. Klimt was not a painter of unbroken tranquility. He painted neither man's sensuality nor the openness of nature. His early works were sombre mood landscapes. Tall, slender trees stand as metaphors of a man's noble solitude, dark marshes and ponds a parable of all things transient, but also of the seductive charm that emanates from the unfathomable. Such scenes of melancholy and withdrawal from the world clearly suited a state of festive solitude. After the turn of the century, this solemn detachment gradually diminished ... The blossoming fields of meadows, flowers and fruit came to be depicted in a "festive mosaic ornament", which contains however a hint of ... and permanence. The dense web of brush-strokes merges the spatial zones into a suspended continuum of colour, impenetrable ... and holding our glances captive like the veiled picture of Sais. Distance becomes akin to closeness, yet this closeness allows no access and remains aloof."[1]

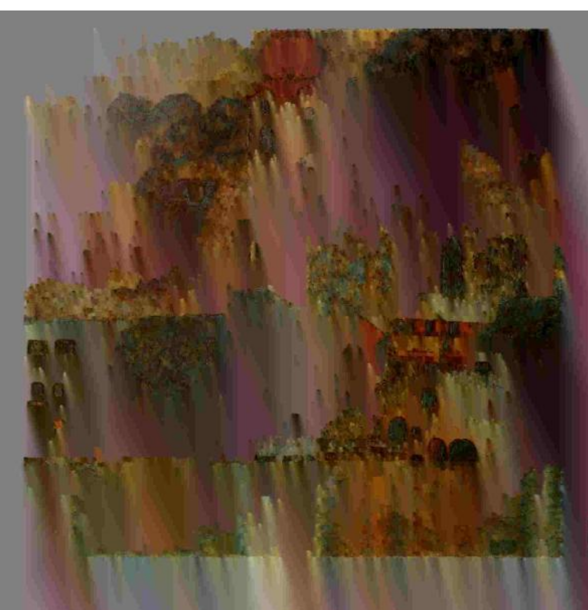
However, there were other, entirely trivial and circumstantial reasons for Klimt's interest in landscapes, such as the long summer seasons he spent on Lake Attersee with the Flöge family from 1900



Forester's House in Weissenbach on Lake Attersee, 1912.
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm.
Private collection.

Houses at Unterach on Lake Attersee, around 1916.
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm.
Austrian Gallery, Vienna.

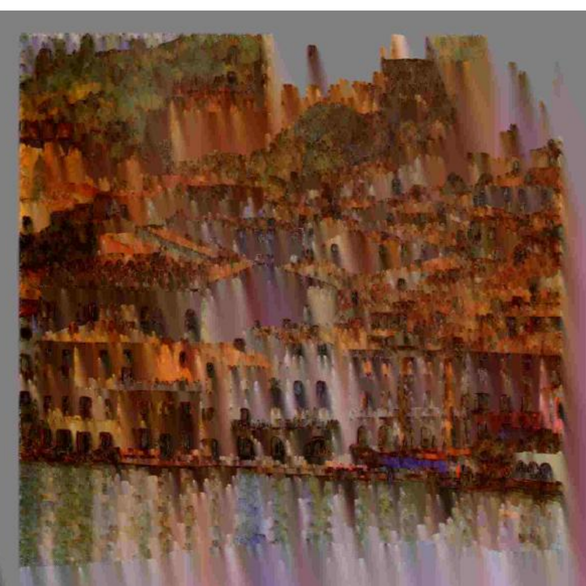




Church at Unterach on Lake Atter, 1916.
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm.
Private collection, Graz.

onwards. Describing his daily routine in a letter to Marie Zimmermann in 1903, he also communicated something of the "philistinism" often ascribed to his persona: "You want to know what sort of schedule I follow — my daily routine. Well, it's very simple and indeed quite regular. I get up very early in the morning, usually at 6, though sometimes a little earlier or later. If the weather's nice and the sun's shining I go to some nearby woods where I paint a little beech grove with a few fir trees in it. I stay until 8 o'clock, have breakfast and then go for a swim in the lake where I'm always very careful. Then I do some more painting. If the sun's shining I paint the lake, and when it's cloudy a view from my window. Sometimes, instead of these painting sessions in the morning, I study my Japanese books — in the open air. Then it's time for lunch. After the meal I have a nap or do some reading until supper. Before or after supper I go for another swim, not every day but usually. After supper I start painting again — a large poplar tree at dusk with an approaching thunderstorm. Occasionally, instead of painting, I go bowling with a few friends in the neighbouring village, though this isn't very often. When it's dark, I have a little snack and go to bed early so that I can get up in good time the following morning. Sometimes this schedule is interrupted by a bit of rowing to loosen the muscles ... The weather here is very changeable — not at all hot, with frequent showers of rain. As for my work, I'm equipped for all eventualities, which is very good to know." 78

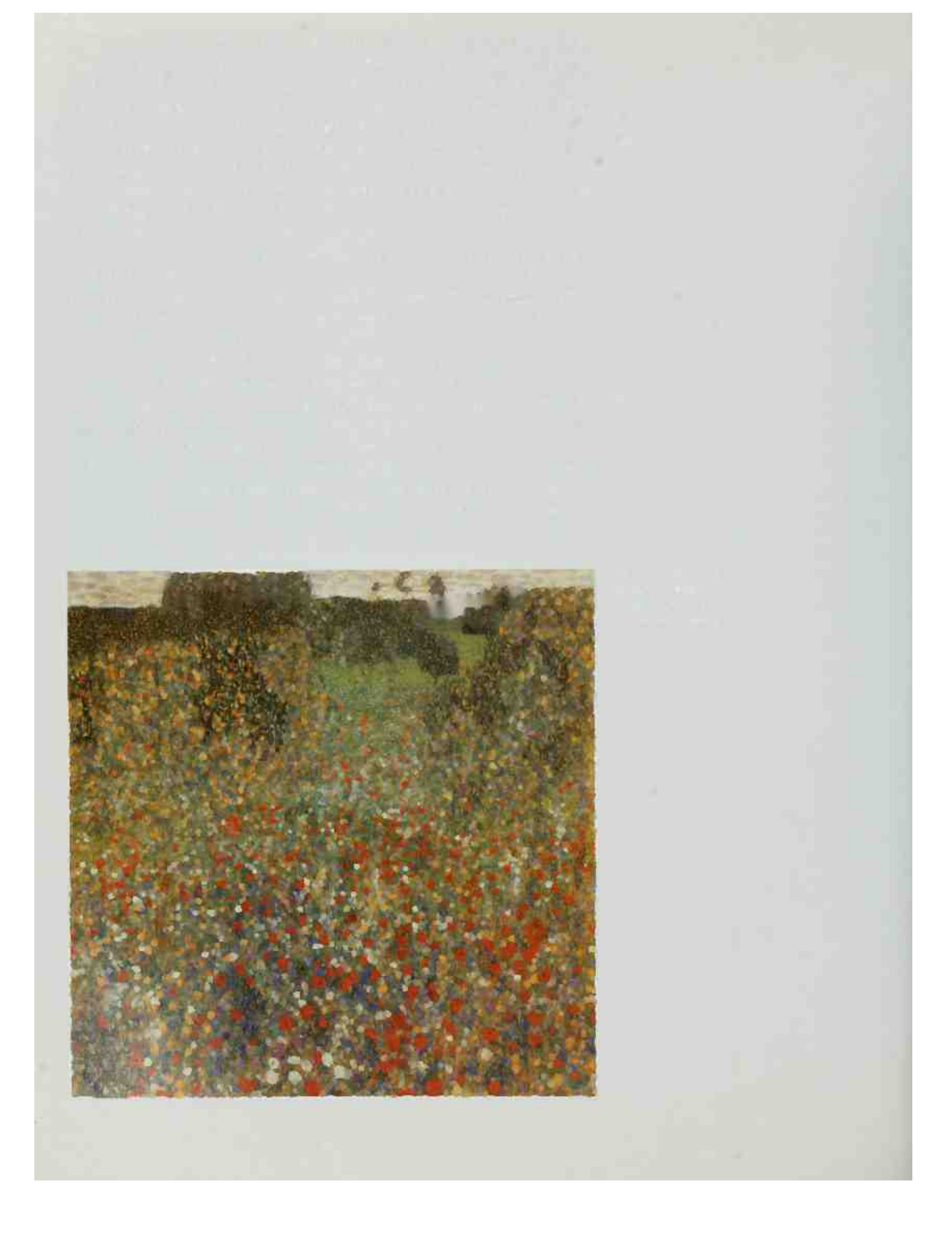




Malcesine on Lake Garda, 1913.
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm.
Destroyed by fire at Immendorf Palace in 1945.

Aside from Klimt's interest in symbolism and his personal work-a-day motivations, Johannes Dobai sees yet another reason for the artist's discovery of landscapes – particularly "mood landscapes" – around the year 1900: the controversy surrounding art policy at the birth of the Secession and the city over Klimt's Faculty Paintings. Landscapes reflected, as it were, a measure of non-political privacy and introspection. "They [illegible] accompany the expression of possible free contemplation … of the phenomenon of life outside the realm of human existence, unfolding, as time goes on, with cool, quiet [illegible]." Such pictures enable us to lose ourselves completely in contemplating a depiction of nature full of atmosphere. There are almost no dramatic or dynamic elements. The position of the eye, the direction of the light, the spatial arrangement and even the seasons [illegible] Klimt's landscapes [illegible] atmosphere. Klimt's [illegible] compositional techniques for creating a specific atmosphere include the repeated use of [illegible] motifs, such as parts of a tree, as well as extremely high horizons. In some paintings of Lake Attersee, the surface of the water with its reflections and refractions of light [illegible] the sole subject of the painting. Naturalism was usually always subordinate, as was topographical accuracy [illegible] in some paintings (e.g. of Lake Attersee).

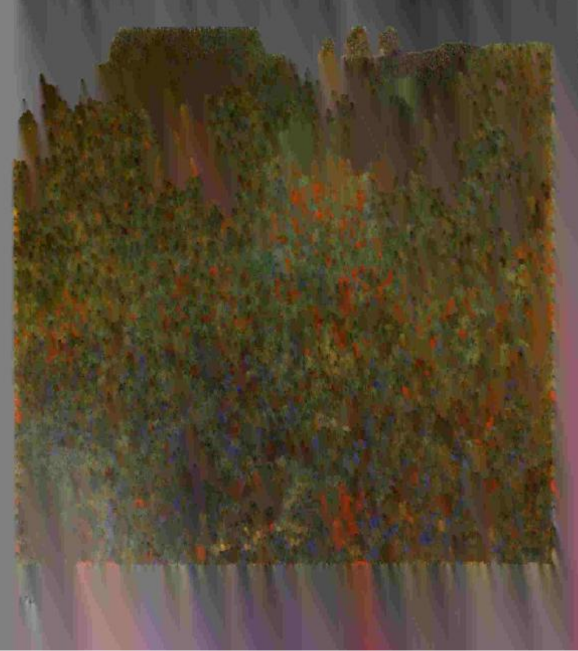
Even [illegible] link Klimt's landscapes with his [illegible]



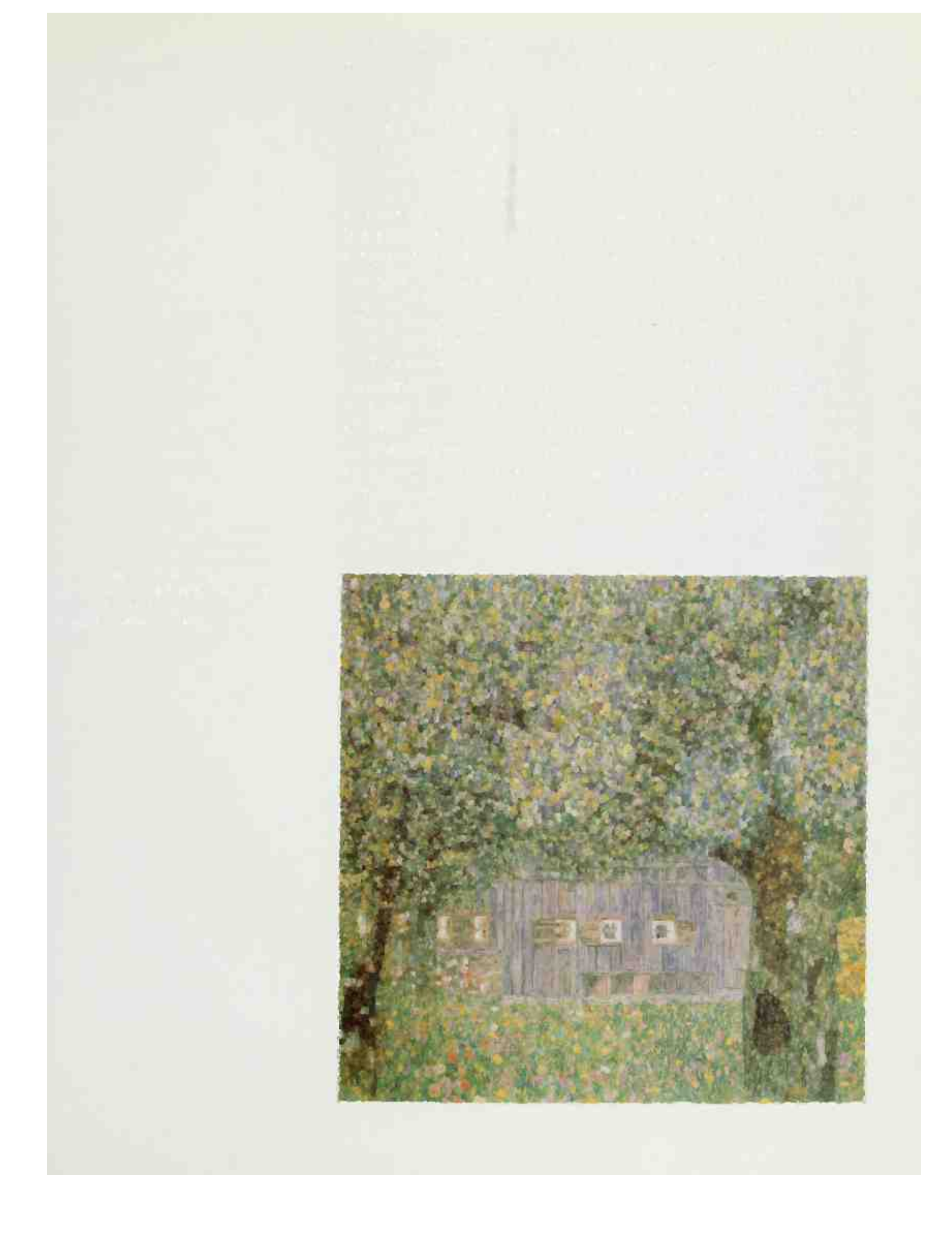
[illegible] that of organic life outside and independent of man-made history, and the idea of natural history as a cyclical process of never-ending growth. [illegible] the medium of all organic life, [illegible] which is supported formally by the depiction of [illegible] almost the entire painting. [illegible]

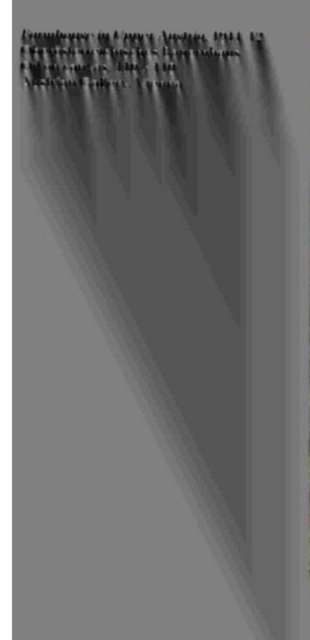
[illegible]

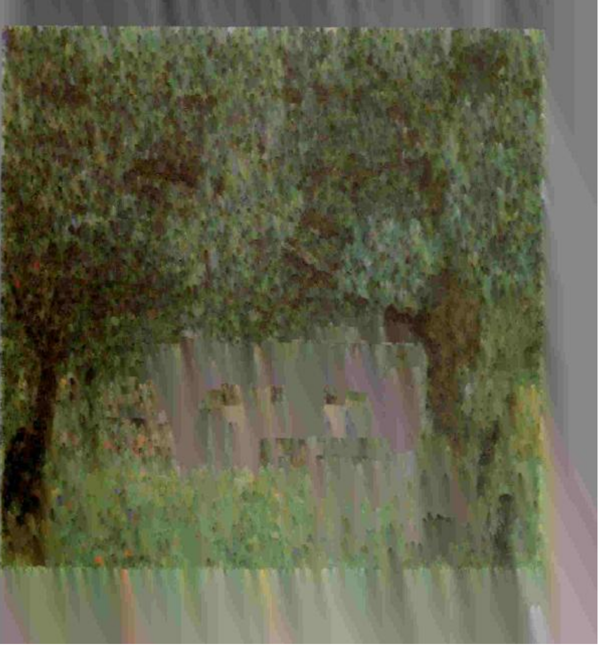
Moreover, the fact that Klimt's landscapes [illegible] lacking sky, [illegible] Confronted with the increasing exploitation of nature and the feeling that it is under mounting threat, we tend to feel a growing yearning for a 'pure', [illegible] nature, [illegible] renewing itself [illegible] Not only do Klimt's landscapes lack any depiction of human labour or activity, but [illegible]



Poppy Field, 1907
[illegible]











Apple Tree I, around 1912
Apfelbaum I
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm
Austrian Gallery, Vienna

have inner peace and a "broad perspective", so that the viewer who derives aesthetic enjoyment from nature in the same way as from a painting is relieved of "the anxious pressure which never leaves him in his normal life". Instead, he is given "atmosphere", a feeling of "harmony" above the dissonant noise and of calm above the movement." [illegible]

These observations sound like direct descriptions of Klimt's landscapes. Though with one exception Klimt should never seek a "broad perspective", presenting an overall view which might allow us to look at nature or a certain scene from a distance. Rather, they [illegible] by a "close perspective", which, according to Riegl, destroys distance. Klimt's landscapes are close-ups and, as Dobai noted, often have nothing that is "inherent". [illegible] Rather than reading a section of nature as a landscape in the usual sense of the word, the artist's view [illegible] in the individual objects of the whole of nature. [illegible] with regard [illegible] of the [illegible] and [illegible], the sense of [illegible].

Indeed, apart from some of his earliest works, Klimt [illegible] as far as [illegible] any kind of a horizon, that is, any spatial depth stretching far into the background. In this sense it may therefore be a little misleading to compare his landscapes with [illegible]. [illegible] which explains why the

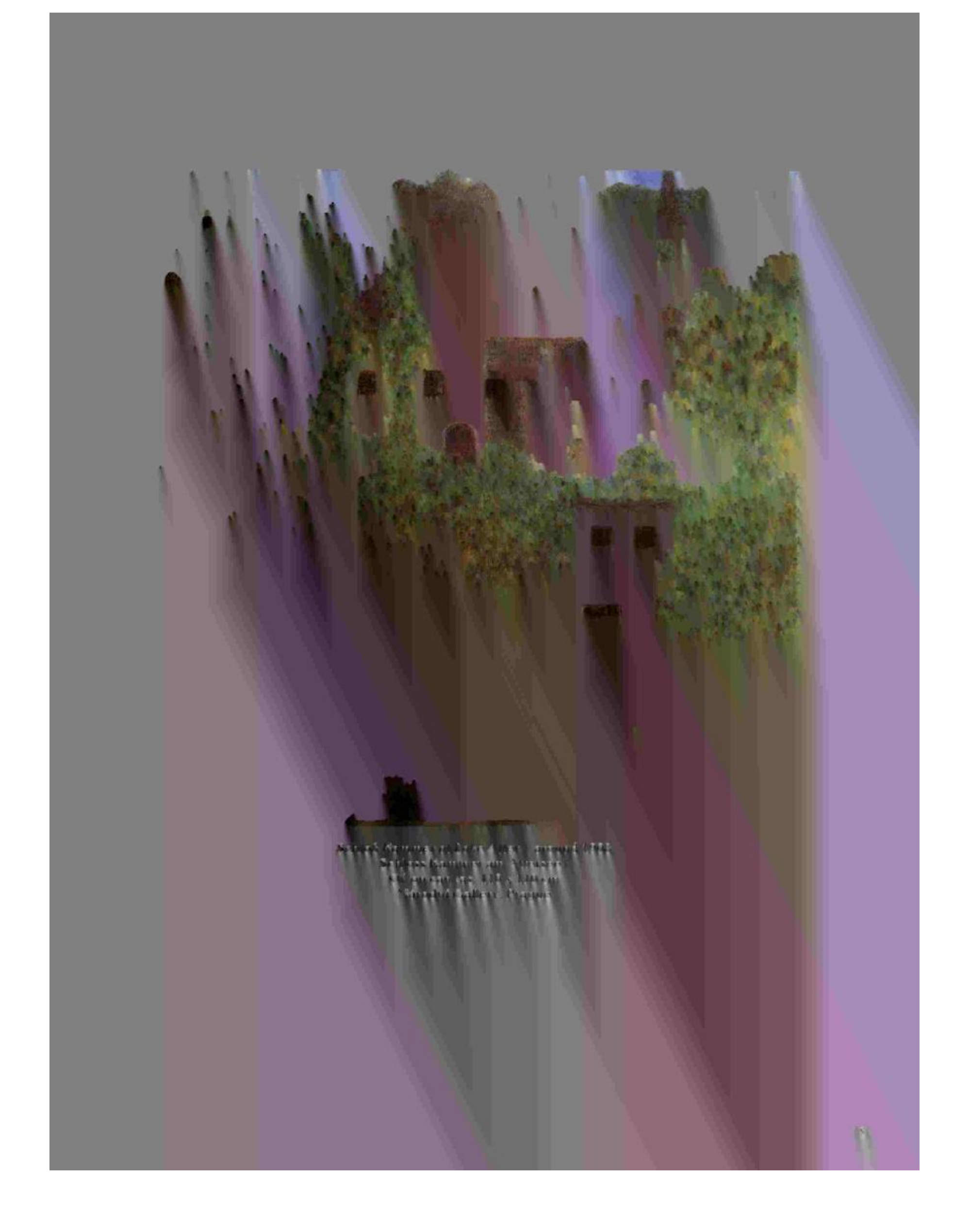




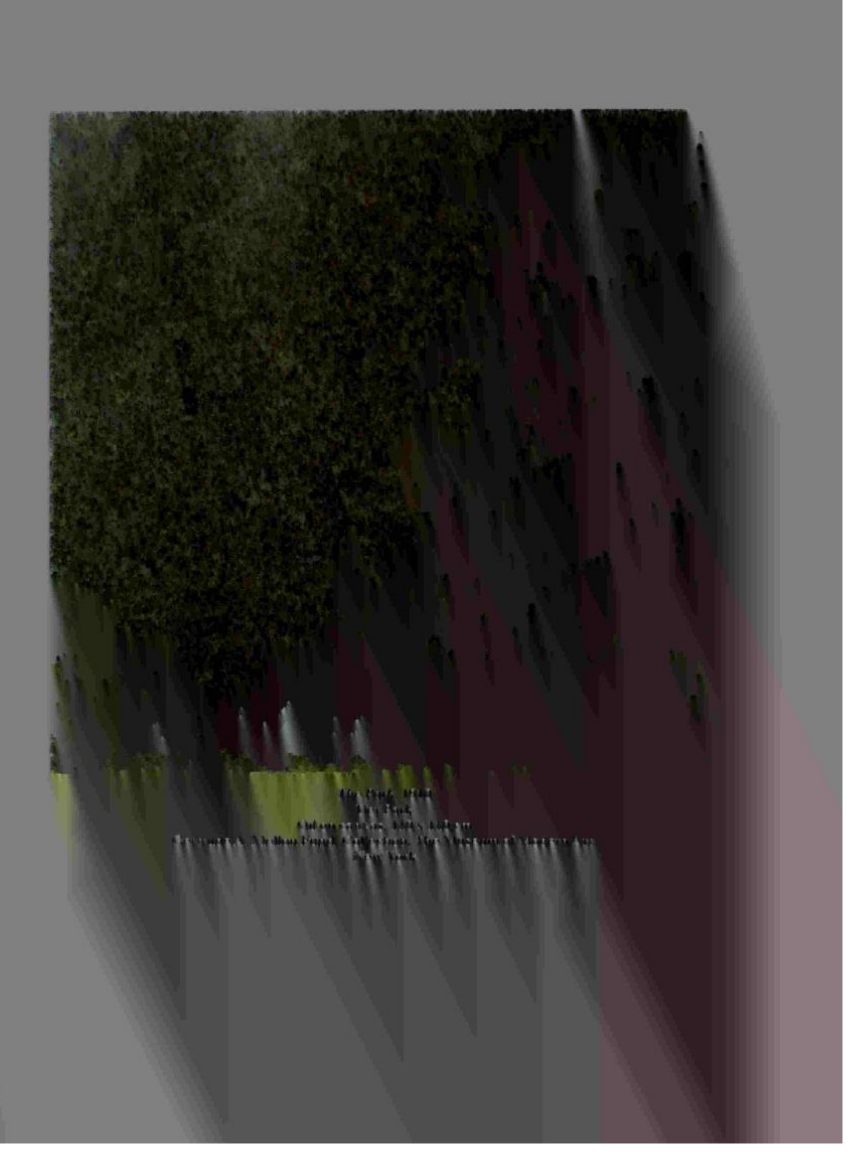




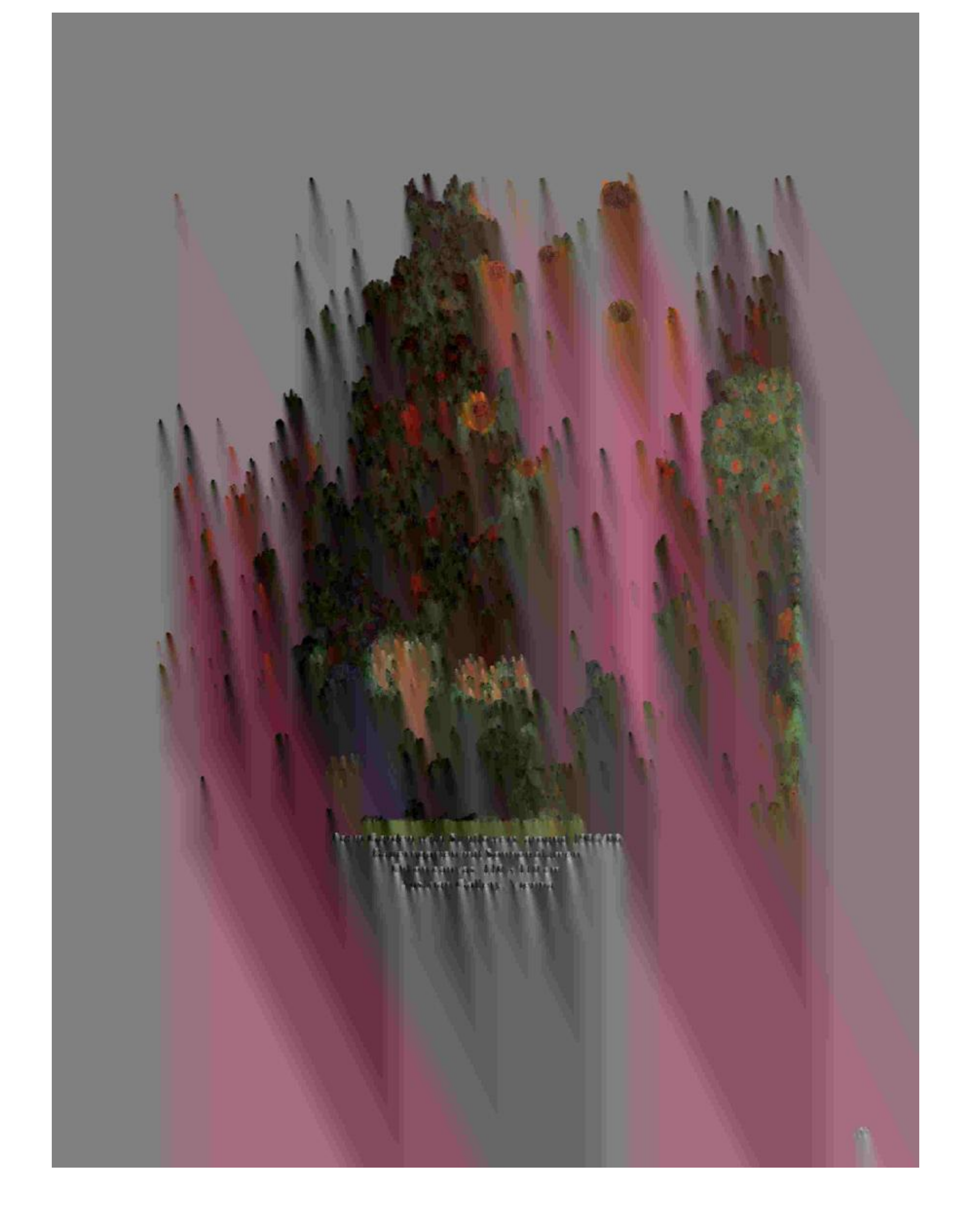


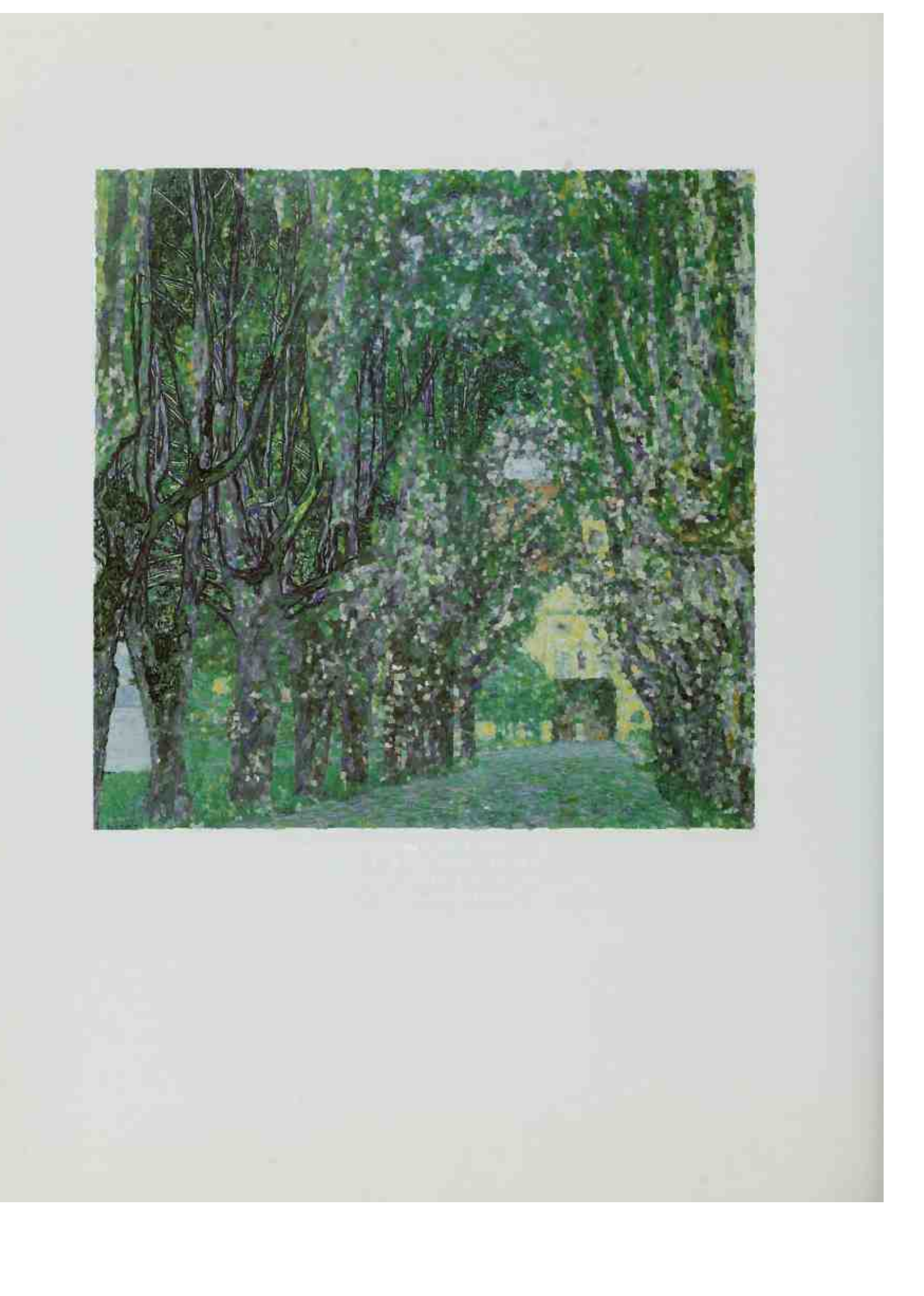


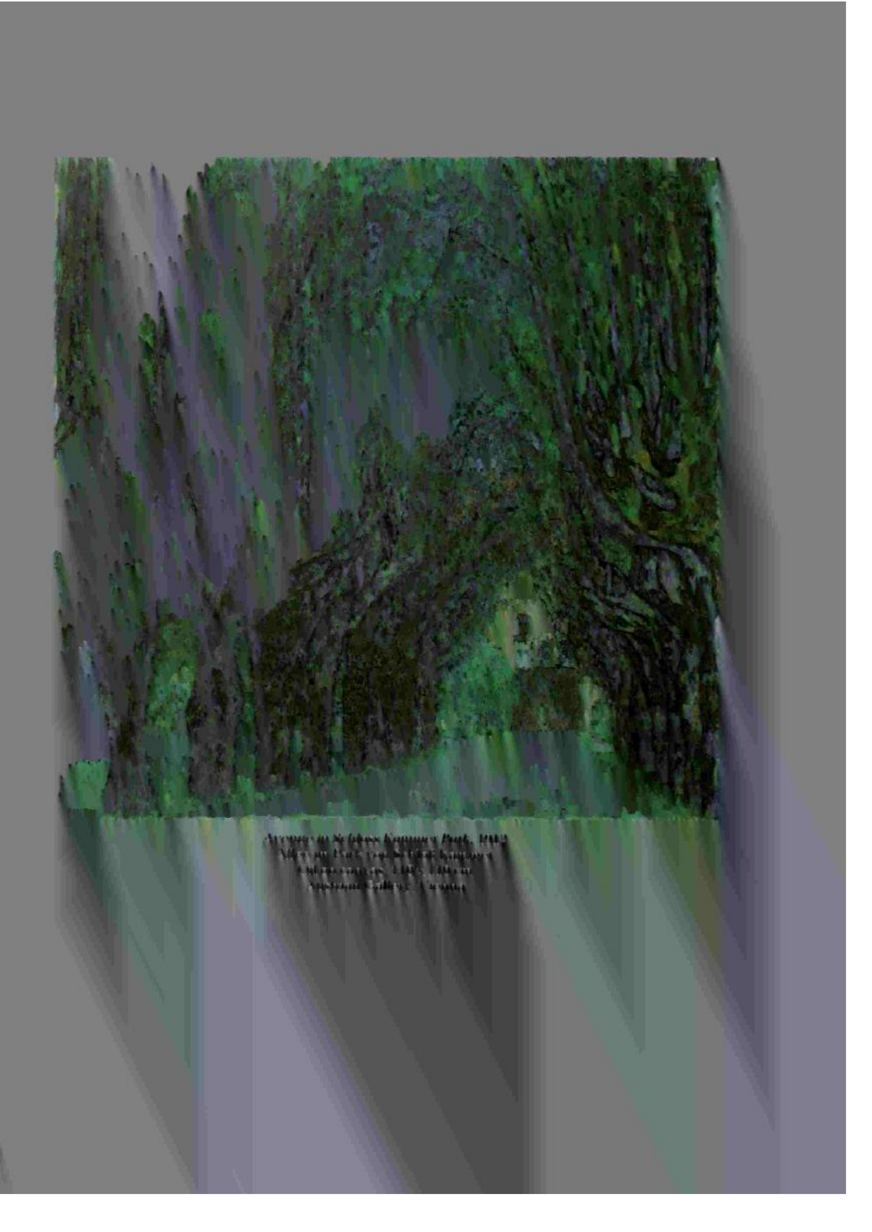


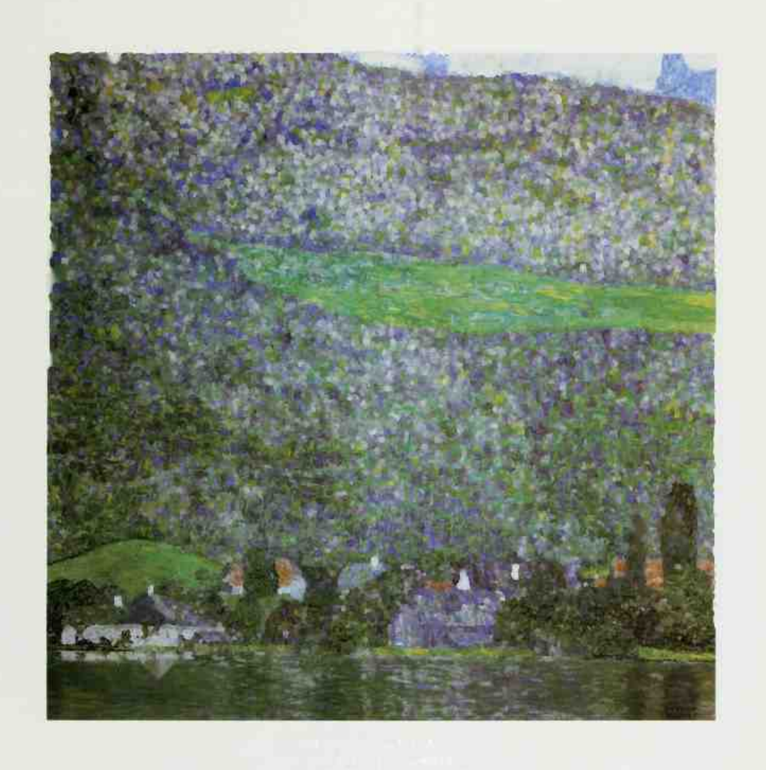


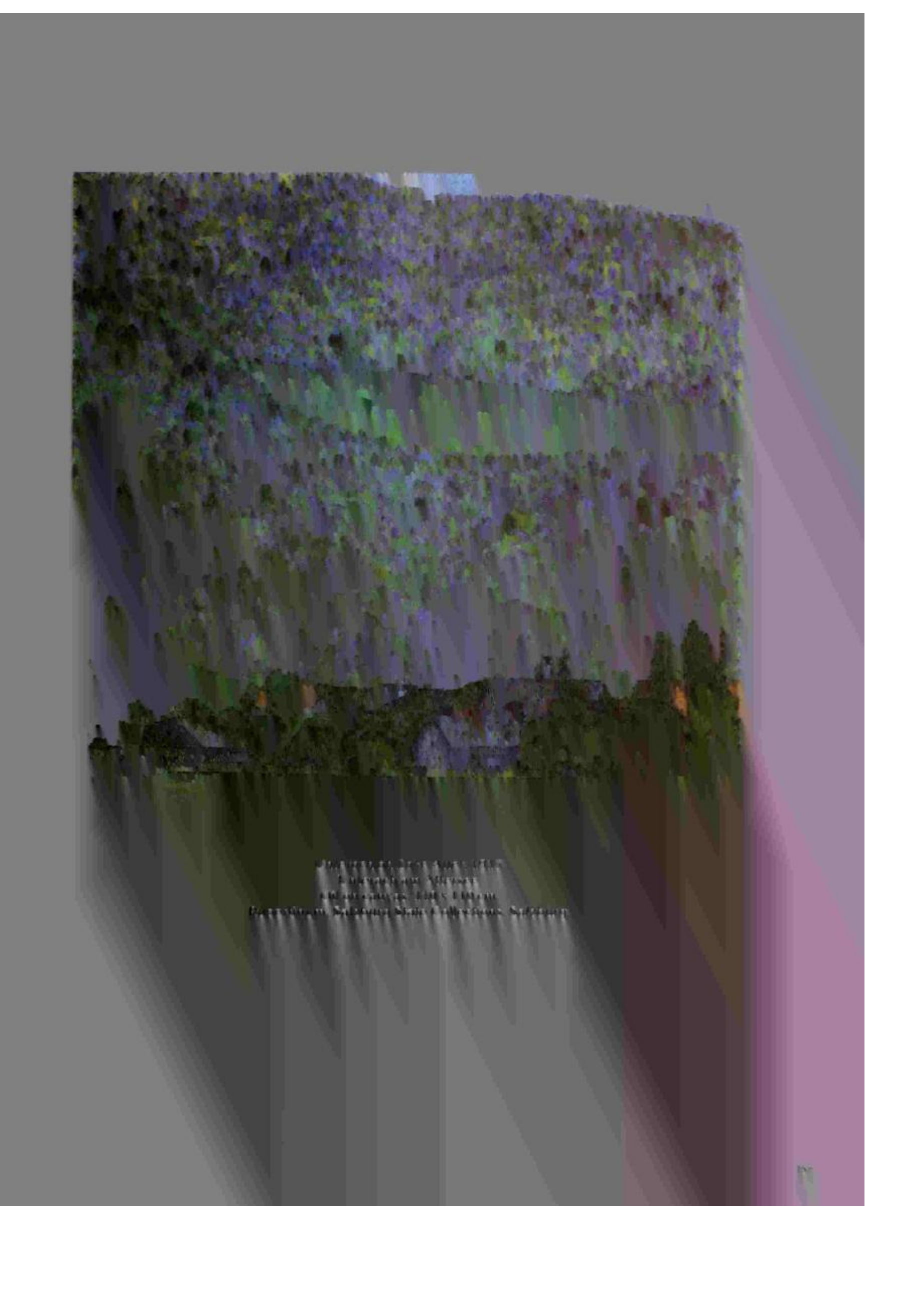




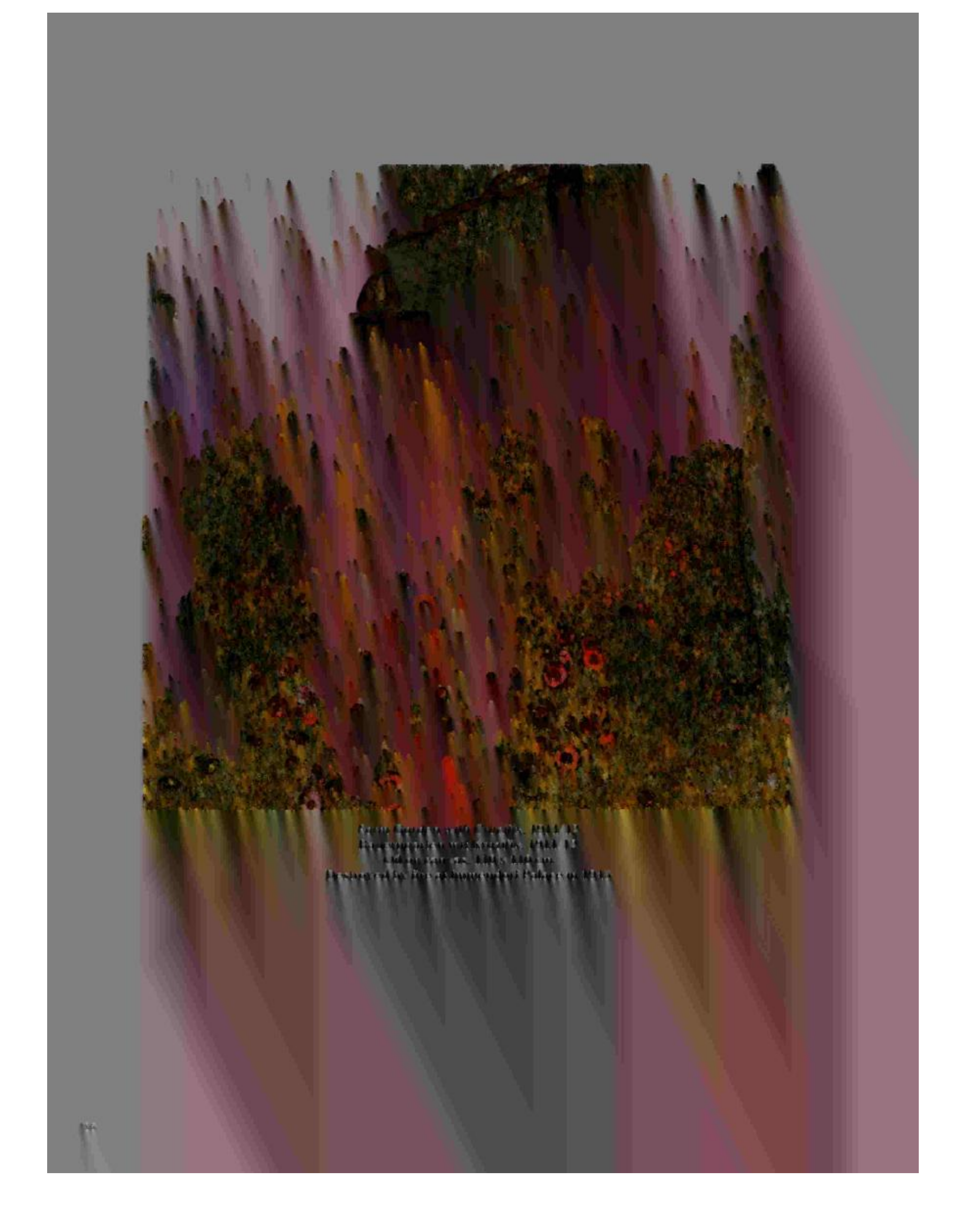






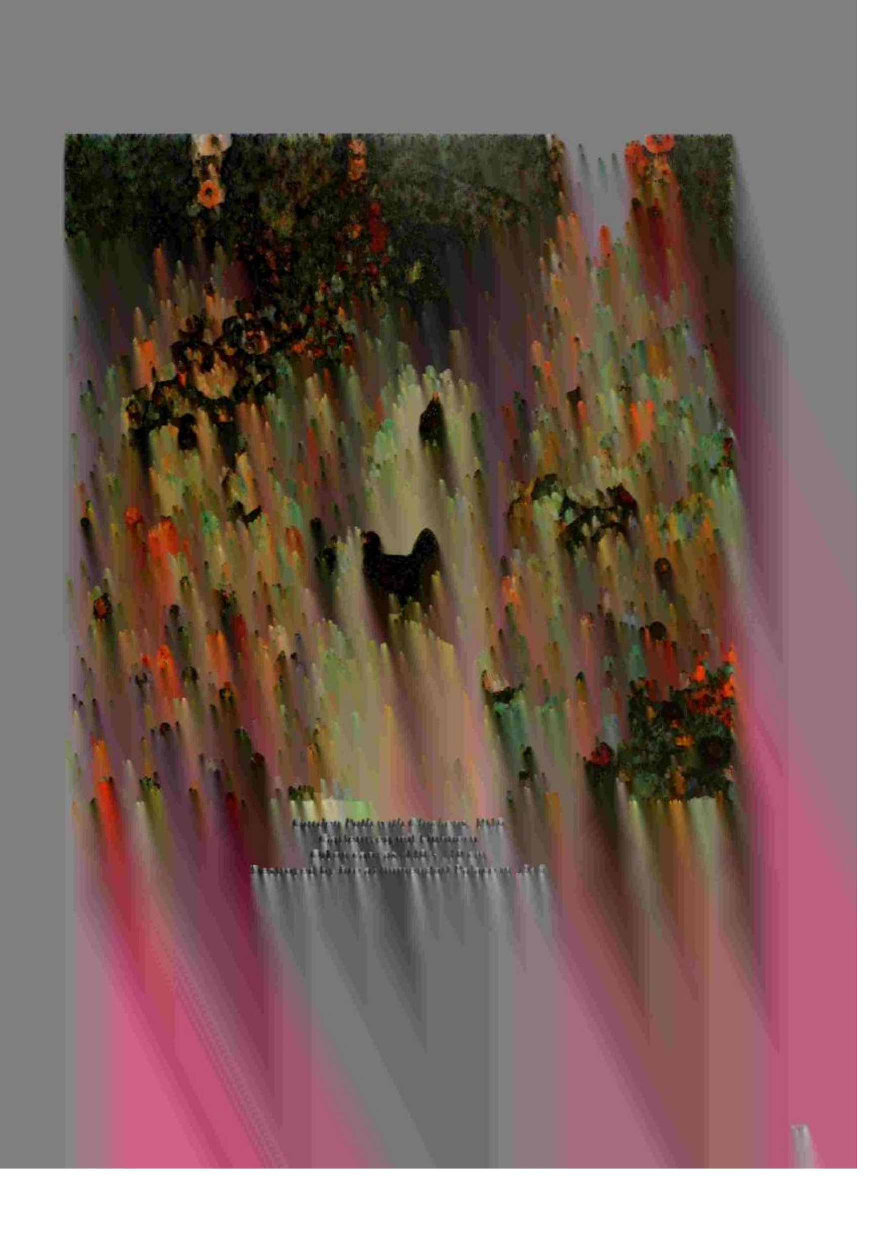




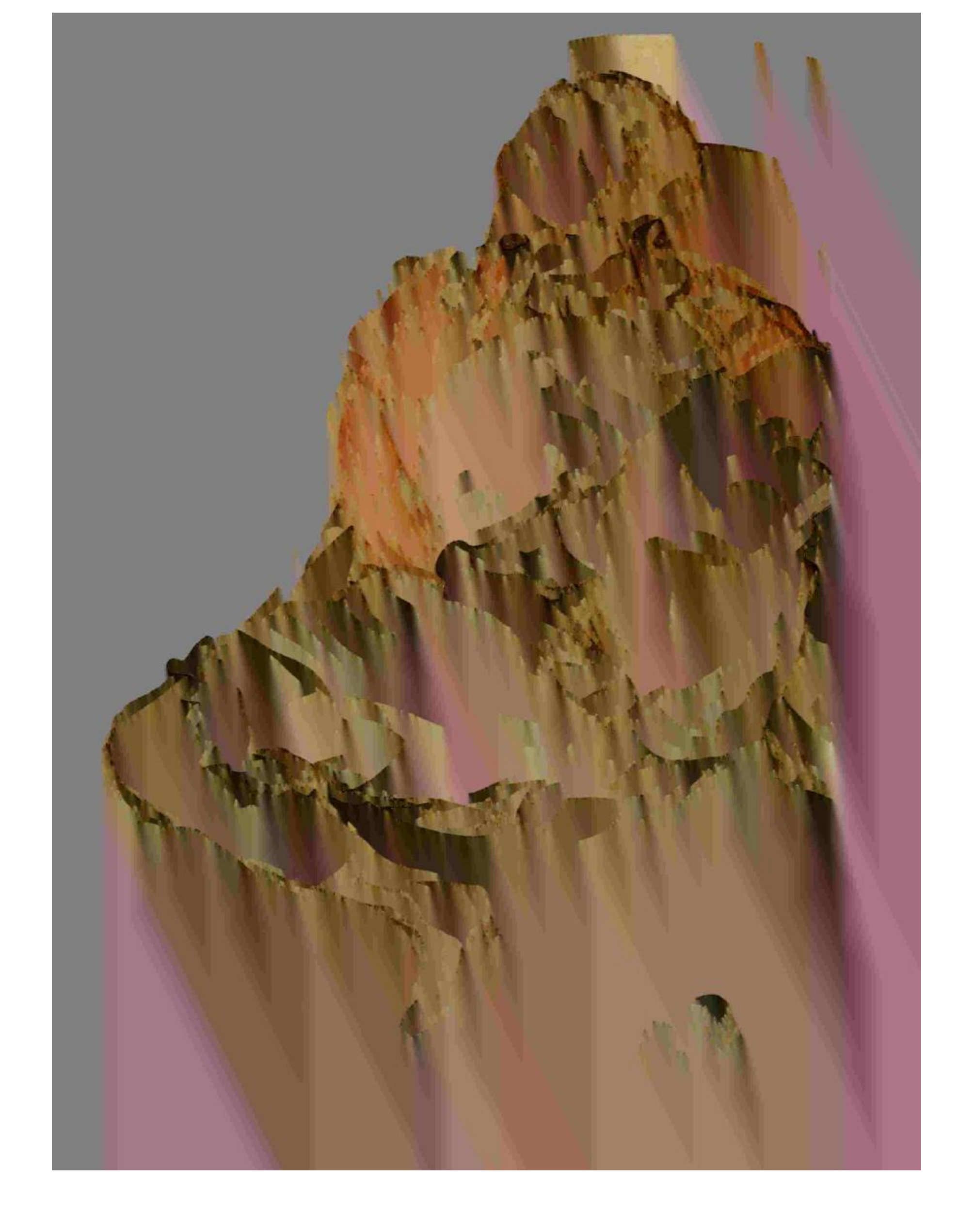


Farm Garden with Crucifix, 1911-12
Bauerngarten mit Kruzifix, 1911-12
Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm
Destroyed by fire at Immendorf Palace in 1945





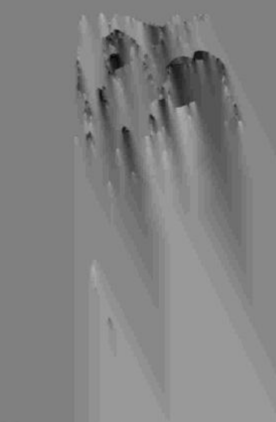








"Solitary Dialogues": Klimt's Erotic Drawings



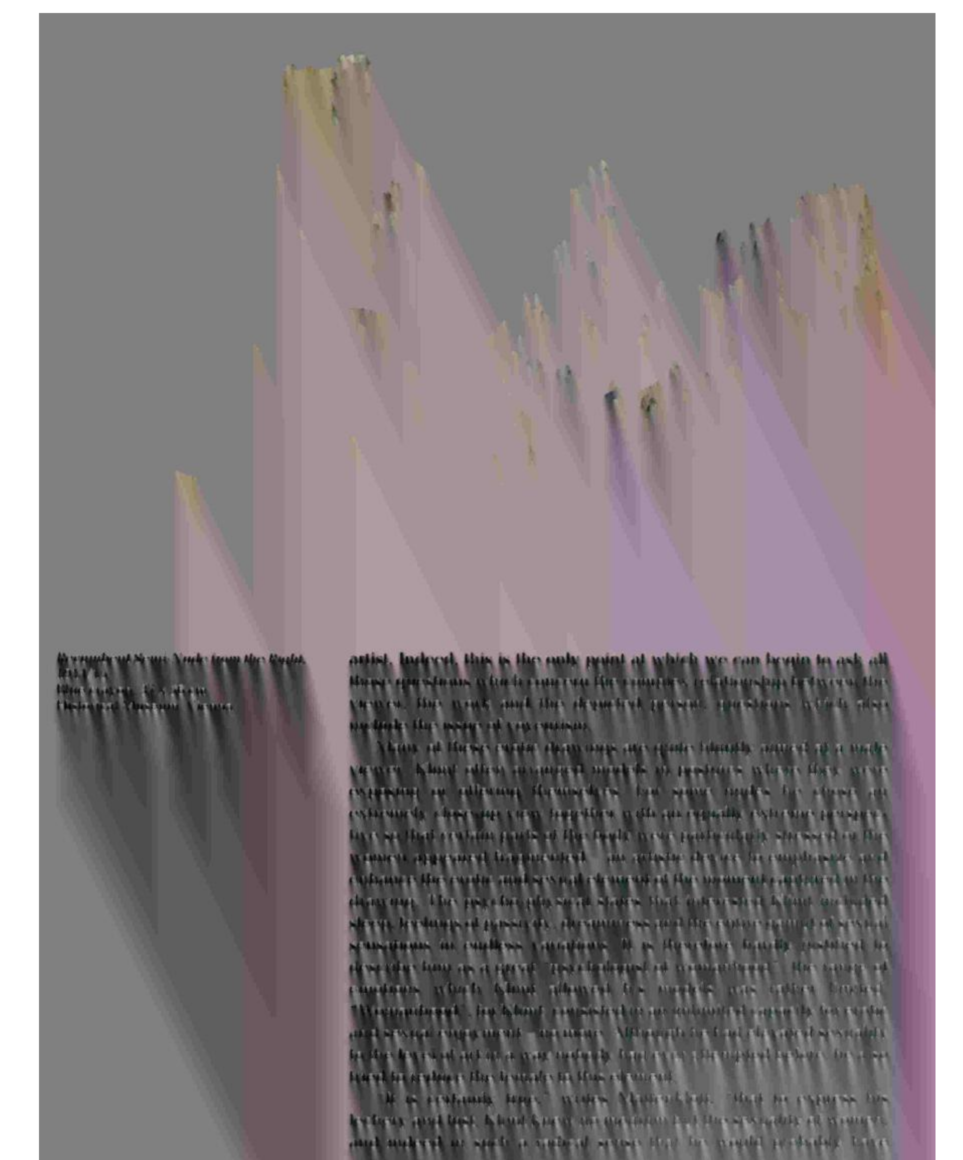
Even during his lifetime Klimt's drawings were regarded by many critics as the best things in his entire oeuvre – a view which is still shared by several art historians today. We must bear in mind, however, that these works were the least likely to be widely known to Klimt's contemporaries. Although a few drawings were occasionally shown at exhibitions and some were published in Ver Sacrum or as very limited private editions of erotic prints, many drawings only ever served as sketches for other works and were therefore never presented to the public. Not until Klimt's death did it become possible to gain an initial overview of his drawings. As early as 1918, the year Klimt died, the art dealer Gustav Nebehay organized an exhibition of the artist's legacy. Since then – and particularly since the 1960s – there have been many publications and exhibitions of Klimt's drawings. However it was not until 1984 that a comprehensive catalogue in three volumes was published by Alice Strobl, containing just over 3,000 drawings which are still accessible today. It is estimated that originally the drawings totalled about 4,000 – 6,000 sheets. Not only did the artistic quality of these drawings serve to increase Klimt's fame, but their erotic aspect, in particular, has always held a certain fascination. Klimt's reputation as an "erotic master" was based particularly on his drawings. They are regarded as an important indication of his protest against the moral ideas of his time and the emancipatory function of his art.

However, considering that only very few drawings were published during Klimt's lifetime, it seems rather dubious to claim that they had a subversive function and to ascribe some kind of protest or emancipation to them. There are at least two reasons why we cannot regard this as social art, i.e. art which deliberately and purposefully aims to bring about social change: firstly, Klimt never pursued any socio-political objectives with his art, and secondly, most of his drawings were only meant as studies in preparation for other works or as private sketches without any public significance whatsoever.

Those who see this part of Klimt's sketch work as a rebellion against certain aspects of the suppression of women in general (which will be discussed later) are taking a very general and unhistoric view of the reception of art. Not only are they merely projecting their own present aesthetic objections to unfavourable social conditions, but they are ignoring the socio-political conditions under which Klimt's art was created and discussed. Then as now, his work has always been the

Girl Friends from the Front and Back, around 1905
Black chalk, 44.5 x 31 cm
Historisches Museum, Vienna



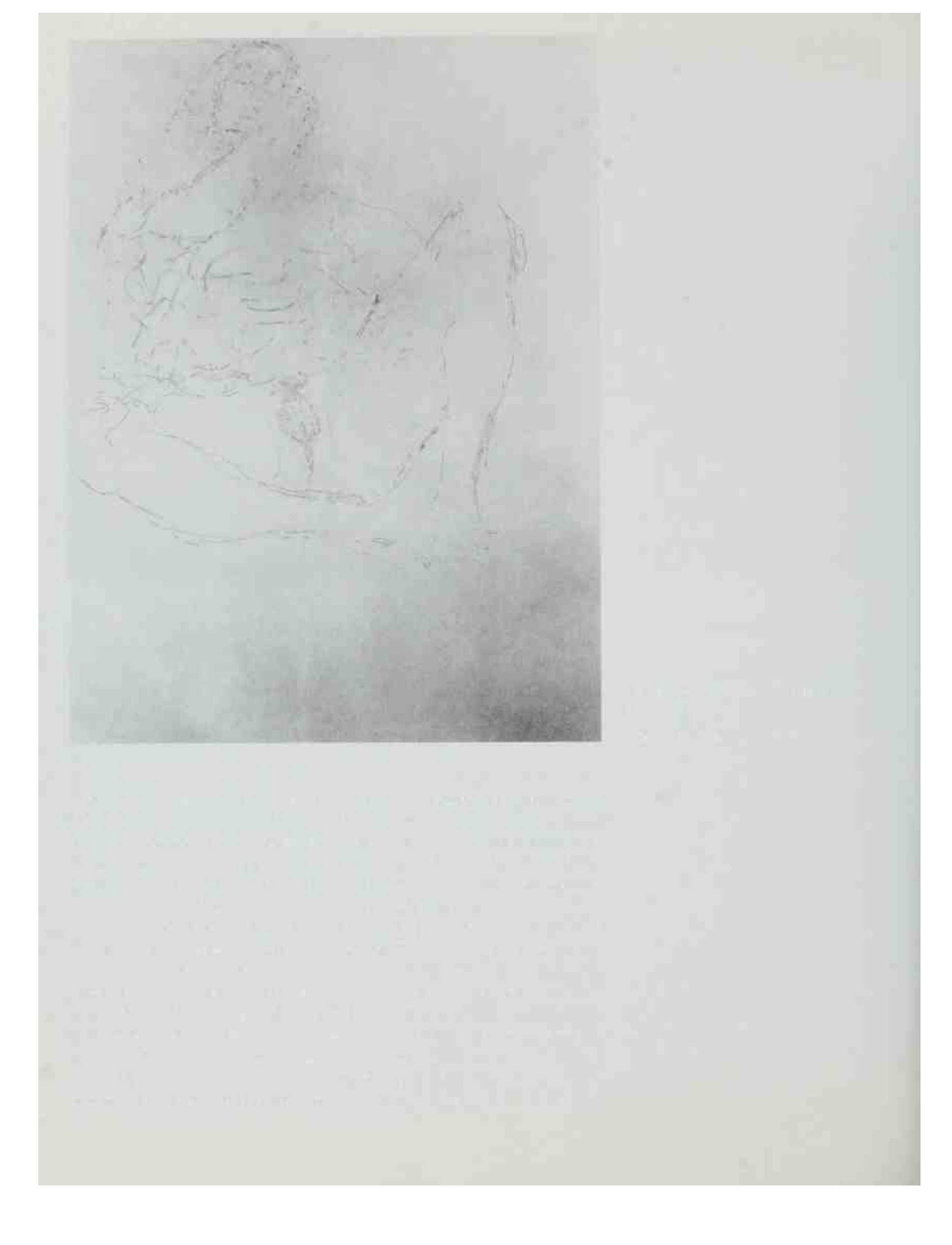


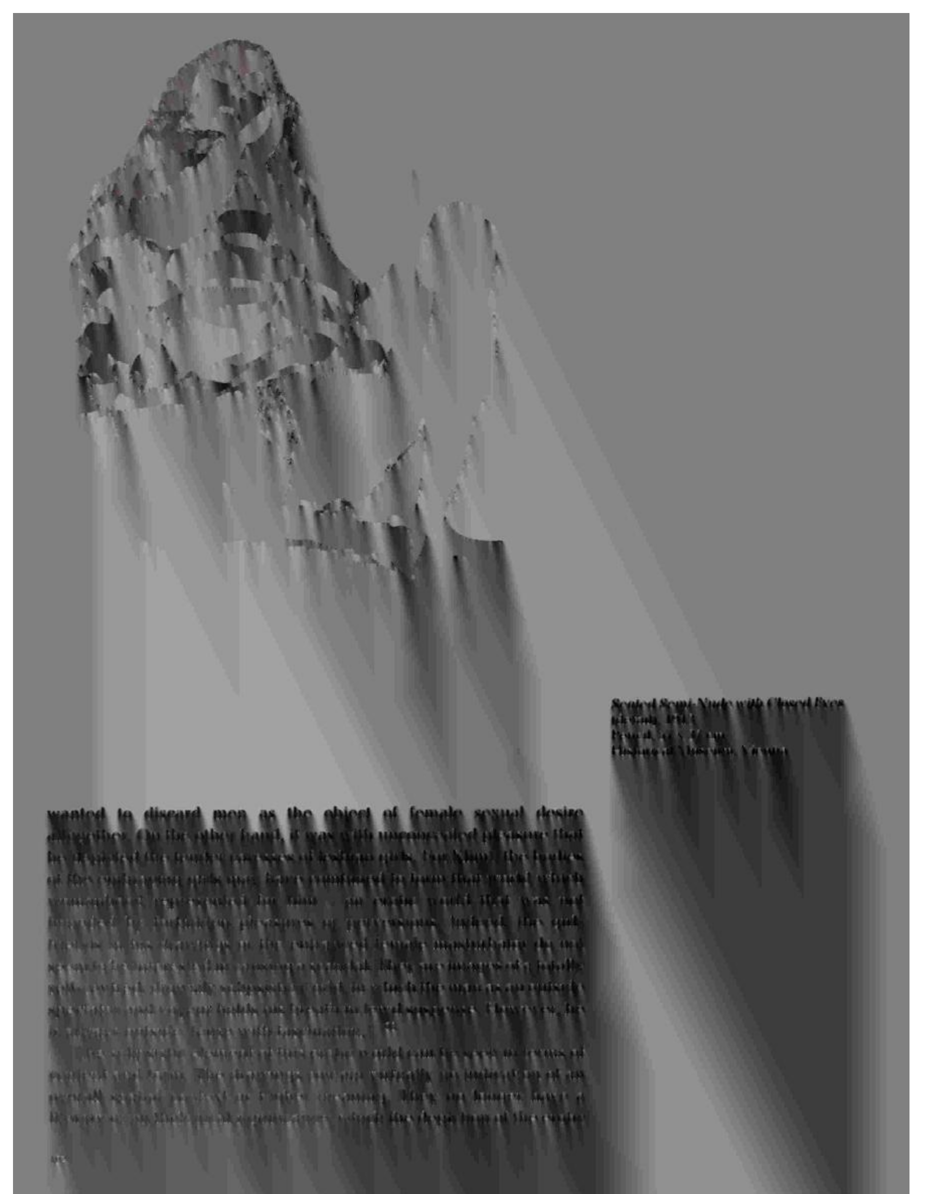
Reclining Semi-Nude from the Right, 1914.
Blue pencil, 37 x 56 cm.
Historisches Museum, Vienna.

artist. Indeed, this is the only point at which we can begin to ask all those questions which concern the complex relationship between the viewer, the work and the depicted person, questions which also include the issue of voyeurism.

Many of these erotic drawings are quite blatantly aimed at a male viewer. Klimt often arranged models in postures where they were exposing or offering themselves, for some nudes he chose an extremely close-up view together with an equally extreme perspective so that certain parts of the body were particularly stressed or the women appeared fragmented – an artistic device to emphasise and enhance the erotic and sexual element of the moment captured in the drawing. The psycho-physical states that interested Klimt included sleep, feelings of passivity, dreaminess and the entire gamut of sexual sensations in endless variations. It is therefore hardly justified to describe him as a great "psychologist of womanhood". The image of women which Klimt allowed his models was rather limited: "Weibmädchen", [illegible] Klimt [illegible] an unlimited capacity for erotic and sexual engagement – [illegible]. Although he had elevated sexuality to the level of art in a way nobody had ever attempted before, he was hard to explain the inquiry in this element.

"It is certainly true," writes Mattenklott, "that he expresses his lechery and lust. Klimt knew no inhibition had the sexuality of women, and indeed in such a radical sense that he would probably have

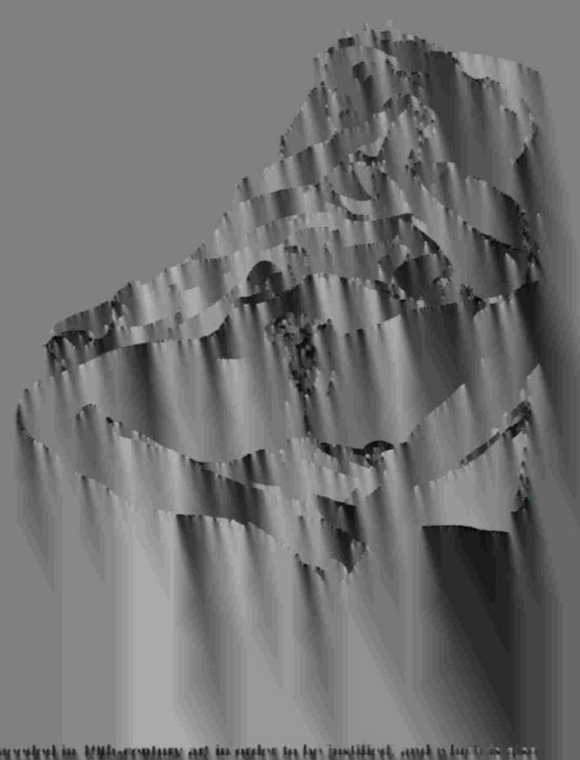


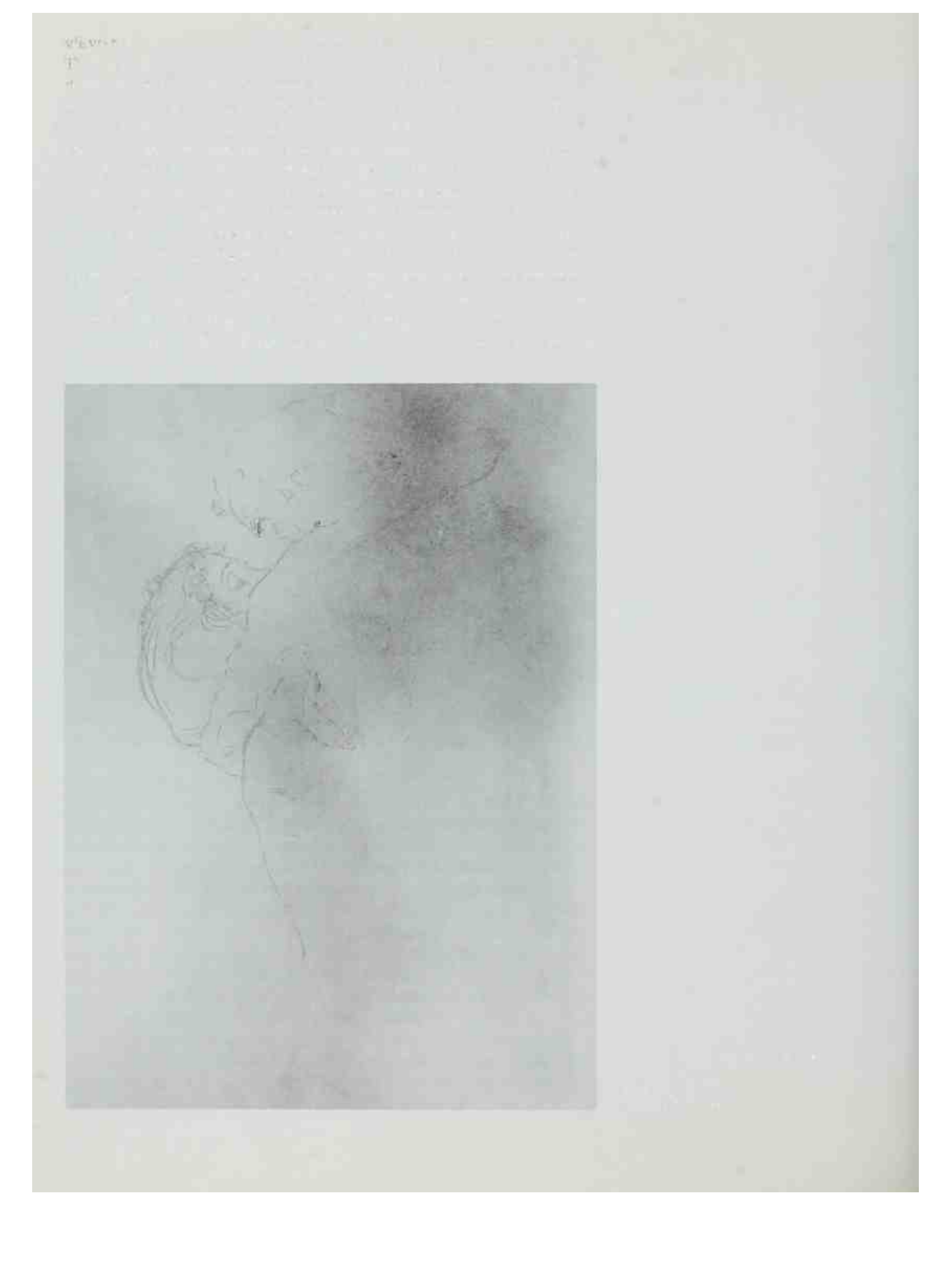


Seated Semi-Nude with Closed Eyes
[illegible]

wanted to discard men as the object of female sexual desire altogether. On the other hand, it was with unconcealed pleasure that [illegible]

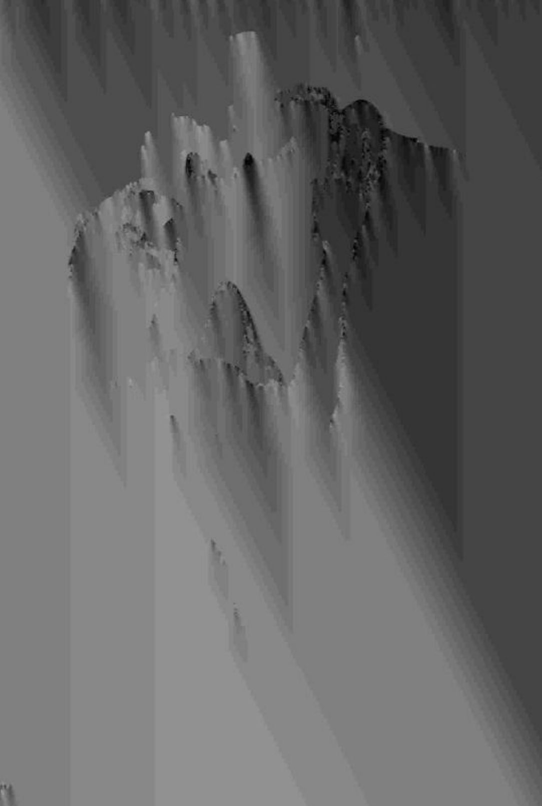




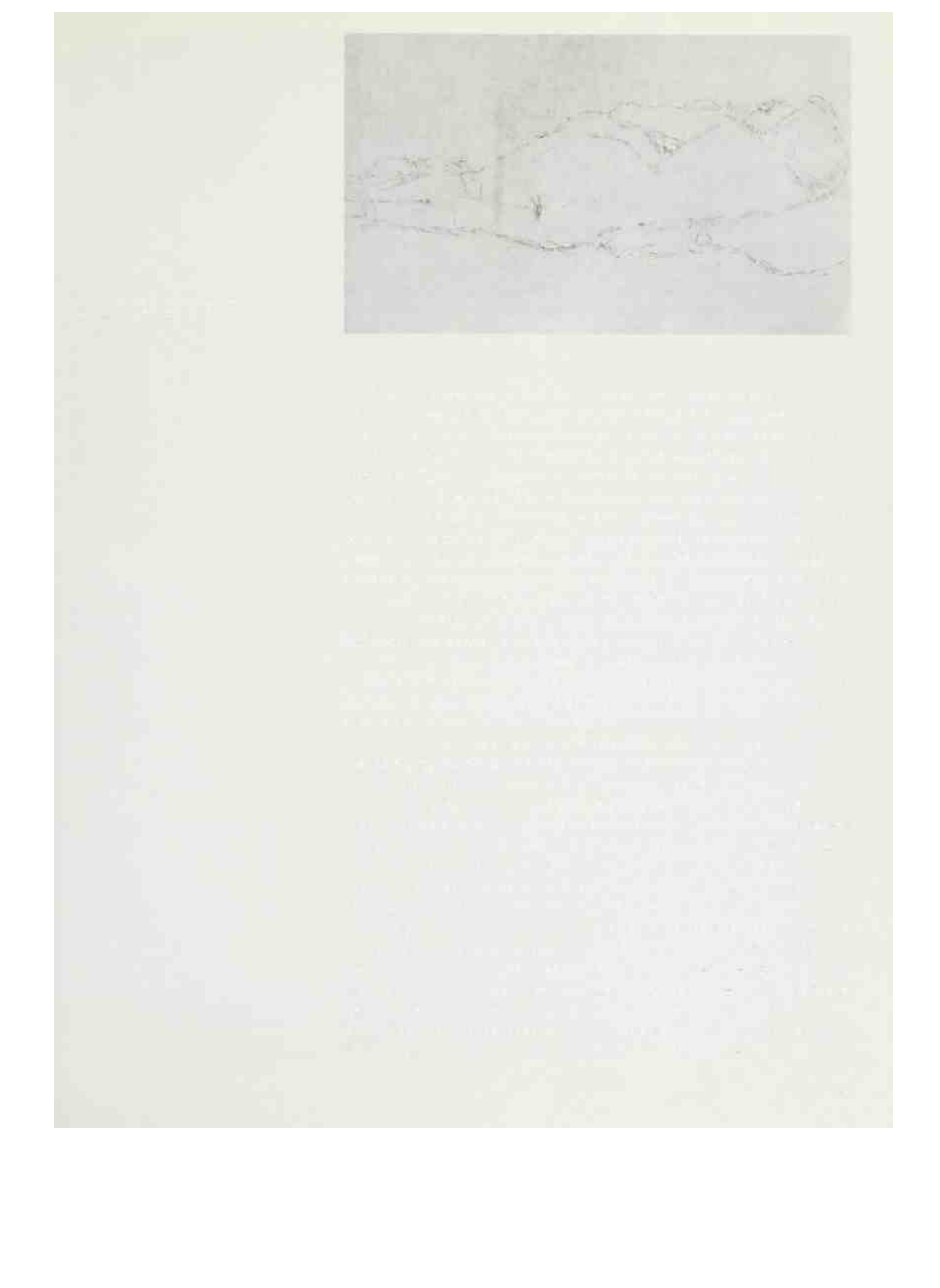


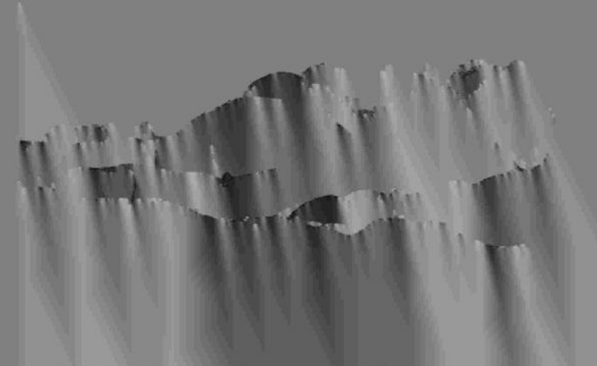
[illegible] (fig. 142) her gaze is even felt to be provocative. [illegible], on the other hand, do not usually give occasion for [illegible] communication between the woman and the viewer at all. This is what gives the women their distinctive autonomy, making it seem that they are governed only by their [illegible] and their emotions. The [illegible] "intimate" pictures also give the impression that the "images of women" can be formed and exist independently of the viewer and his gaze — which is of course not really the case at all. If one chooses to ignore the obvious fact that all these drawings are totally dependent on the gaze of the male artist and the viewer, then it is indeed possible to believe that they are about woman's desire for autonomy. "Emancipated" woman can love herself, her body, her desires and her sexuality. At the same time, eroticism and sexuality are depicted as though they were the only — and final — sphere in which autonomy can be achieved.

This control which is exercised by the viewer's gaze gives rise to a



[illegible], around 19[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] Museum, Vienna





number of questions which have never really been examined properly. Because, instead of "interpreting" Klimt's drawings as autonomous works of art, critics would have to include themselves as viewers [illegible] the nature of their academic or private interests in the actual analyses. They would have to examine not only the object of their perception—the work of art—but also the process of perception itself.

In Klimt's erotic drawings—and indeed throughout his entire œuvre—it is never the man who looks sexually stimulated. He never loses control over himself. Instead, Klimt was interested in depersonalizing the woman. Forced by the limits of distance and [illegible] to protect both the male observer and the artist from such an experience. By making only the woman an object, a divide is maintained between the sexes, and the man's power over the "image of the woman"—both in the process of creation and in its observation—protects him from any questioning of his identity. The identity of woman, on the other hand, is attacked by being reduced to no more than an environmental product of nature.

It is impossible to say in one sentence what the object of Klimt's lust as a graphic artist was. He loved women—this would be saying too much. After all, his perception of women was far too restricted. He loved the female body—but such a statement says too much and too little. Unless specific commissions demanded otherwise, his interest focused on the erotically stimulating body and the very deprived him, and the female body in general. It would therefore be more accurate to say that he was interested in the female element of the female body—and frequently in its unambiguously sexual aspect.

This perspective of femininity always evokes the impression that the women's bodies are fragmentary. Either only part of the body has been depicted, or certain sections of it have been emphasized by means of perspective so that it seems like a torso. In recent years there has been some controversy in the history of feminist art as to how one should assess this fragmentation of the female body. To put it simply, there are two opposite opinions: adherents of the one view feel that



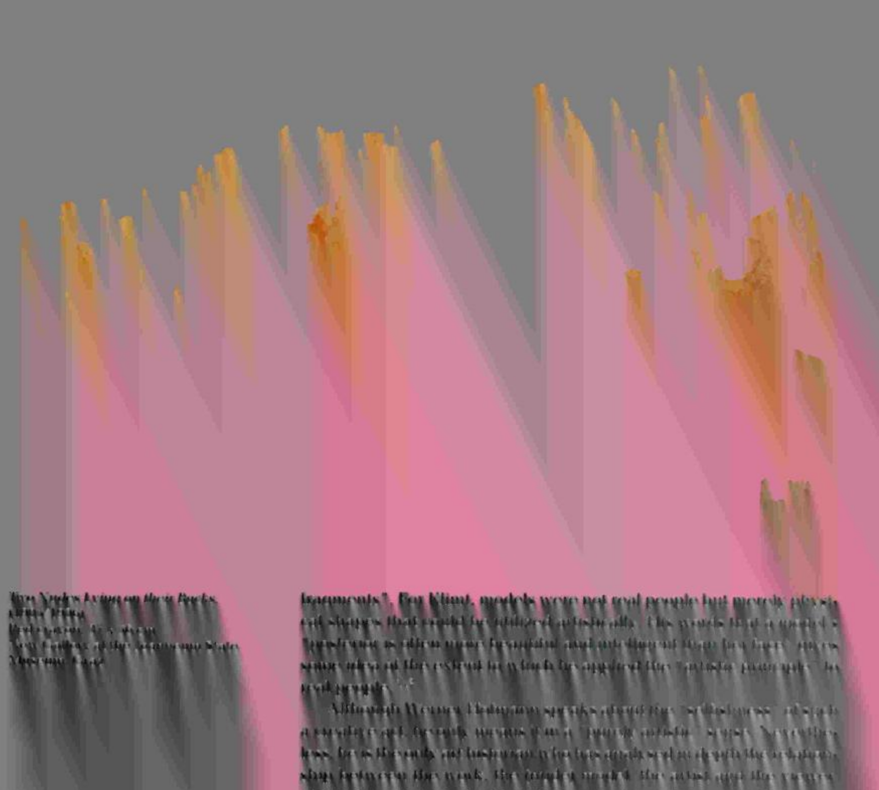
[illegible] presentation of this kind attacks a woman's integrity and is [illegible]

[illegible]



Two Girl Friends Lying on their [illegible]

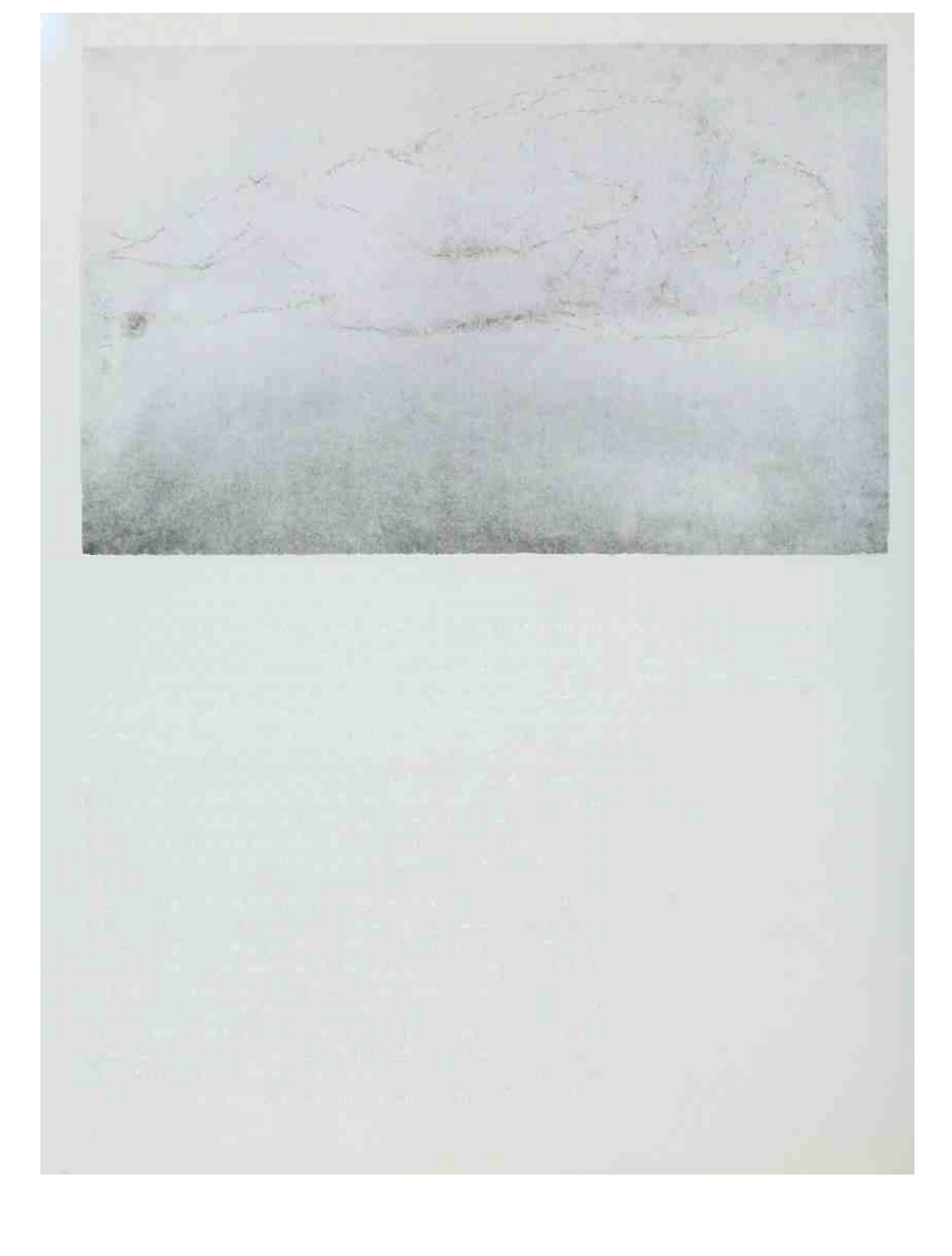


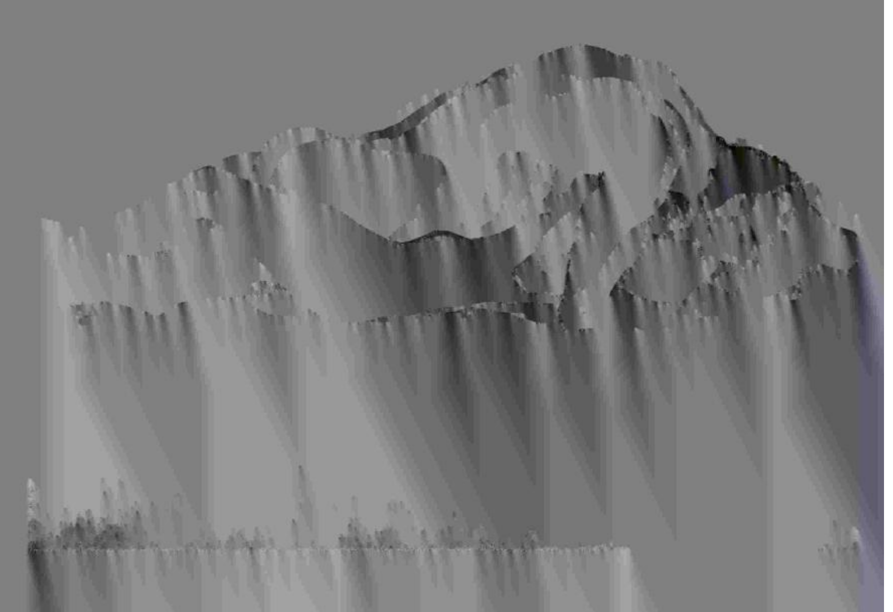


Two Nudes Lying on their Backs, [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
Neue Galerie of the Joanneum State Museum, Graz

fragments". For Klimt, models were not real people but merely physical shapes that could be utilized artistically. His words that a model's [illegible] some idea of the extent to which he applied this "artistic principle" to real people.

Although Werner Hofmann speaks about the "selfishness" of such a creative act, he only means it in a "purely artistic" sense. Nevertheless, he is the only art historian who has analysed in depth the relationship between the work, the female model, the artist and the viewer: [illegible]

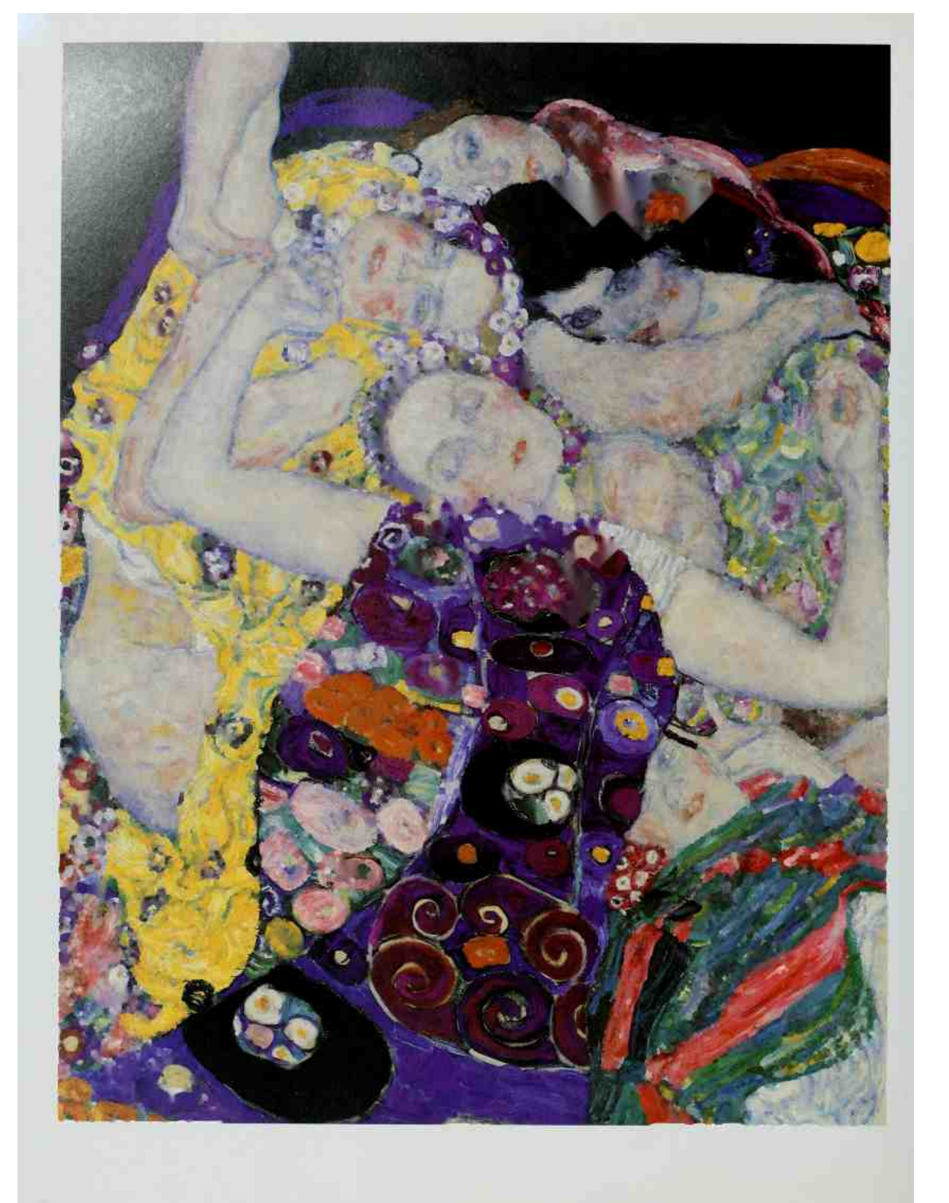


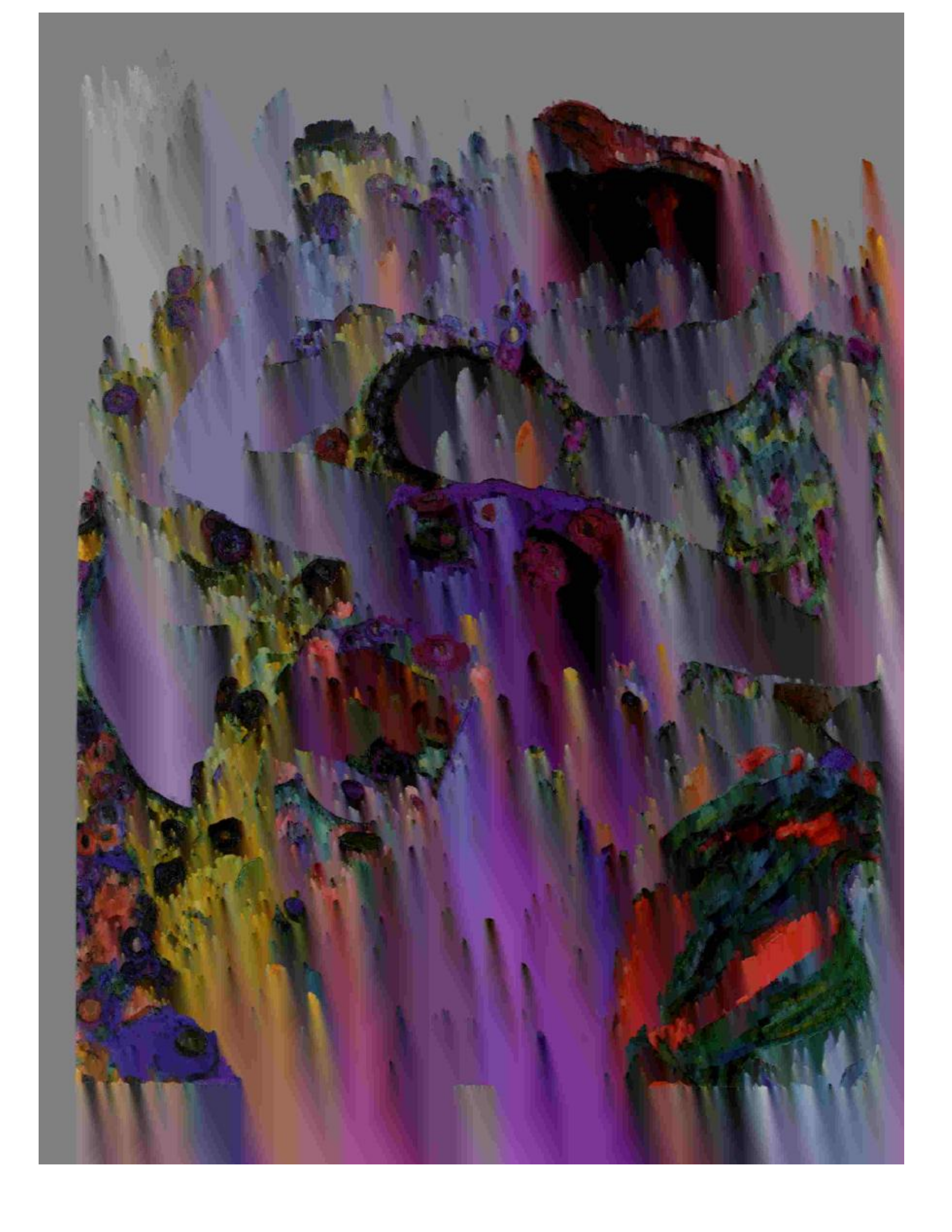


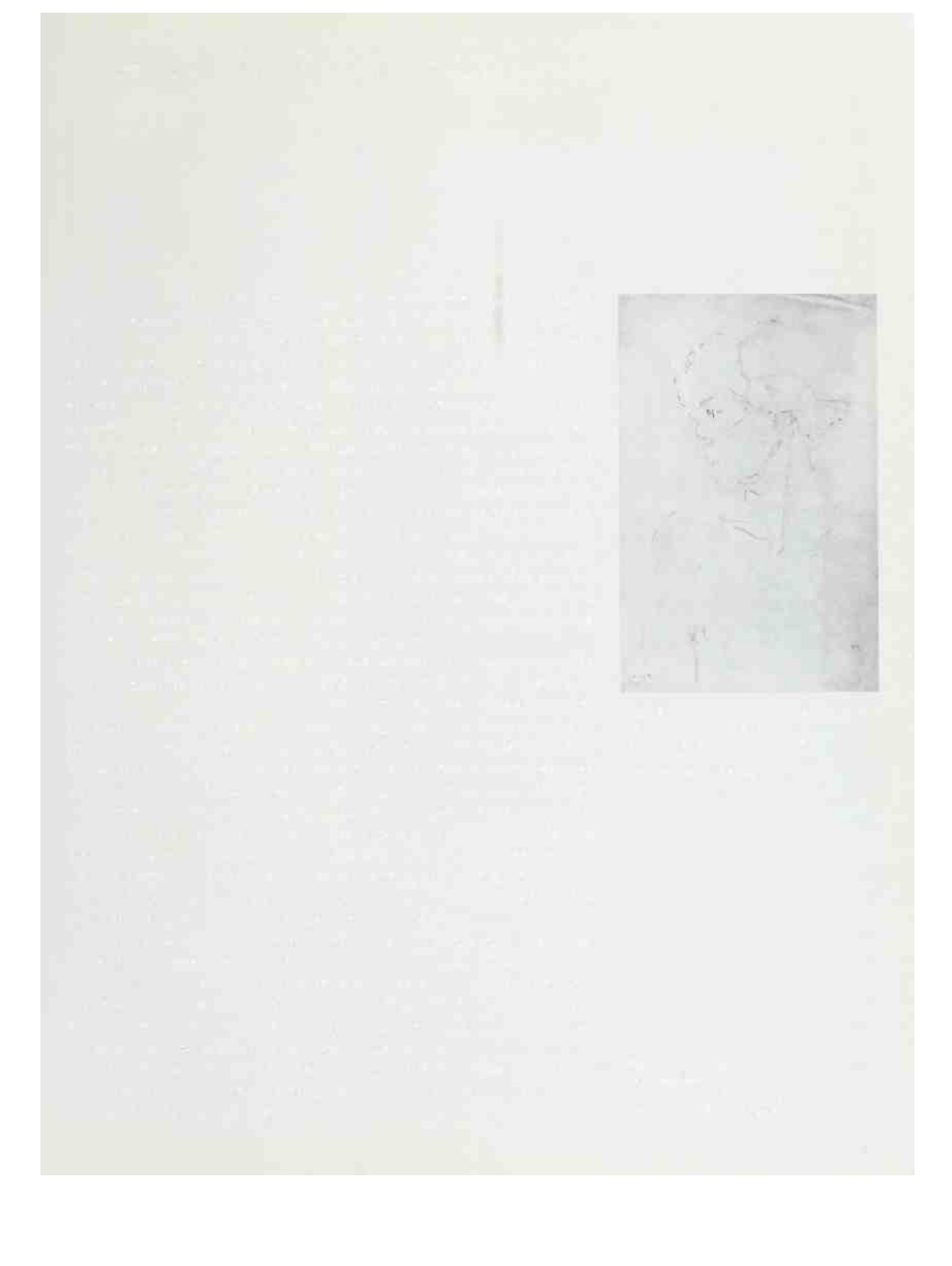
Thus Hofmann gives a precise description of the male artist's control over the woman, though only in relation to the artist's act of creation which – as we should understand it – necessarily includes his control over the substance as the "bearer of all form". Surprisingly, without even qualifying his approach, Hofmann makes no distinction between models and the material which the artist uses (canvas, paper etc.) but groups them together under the concept of "substance". By equating the artist's act of creation with that of sexual intercourse and its inherent "self-surrender", he then tries to turn the relationship between the artist and his model into its exact opposite and completely denies the element of masculine dominance: "The ... man's dominance is of course limited and diverted into a give-and-take dialogue."

In Klimt's work, although the woman is [illegible] makes the artist, in the final analysis, it is Klimt who [illegible], and he expresses his [illegible] by creating a world in the form of womanhood." Thus the real relationship between the painter and his model has been deliberately turned upside down. Hofmann suppresses everything that can be said about the actual control of the painter over his model. It is totally obscure what the active and autonomous role of the model and indeed her "engagement" should be. Instead, he points out the [illegible] and the identification of Klimt's "world" with his "image of Woman" which went so far in his drawings that all allegorical or

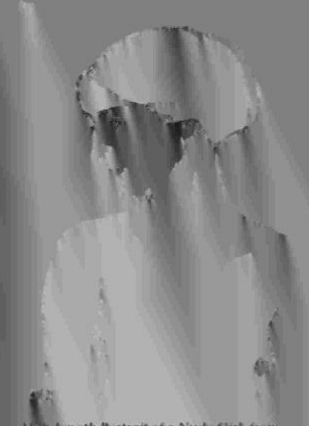
Recumbent Lovers, from the Right
around 1908
Black chalk, [illegible]
Historisches Museum, Vienna



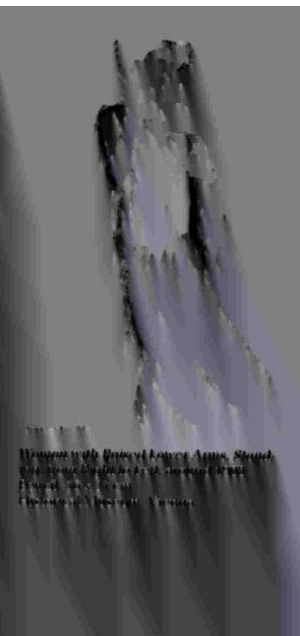




"The World in Female Form"

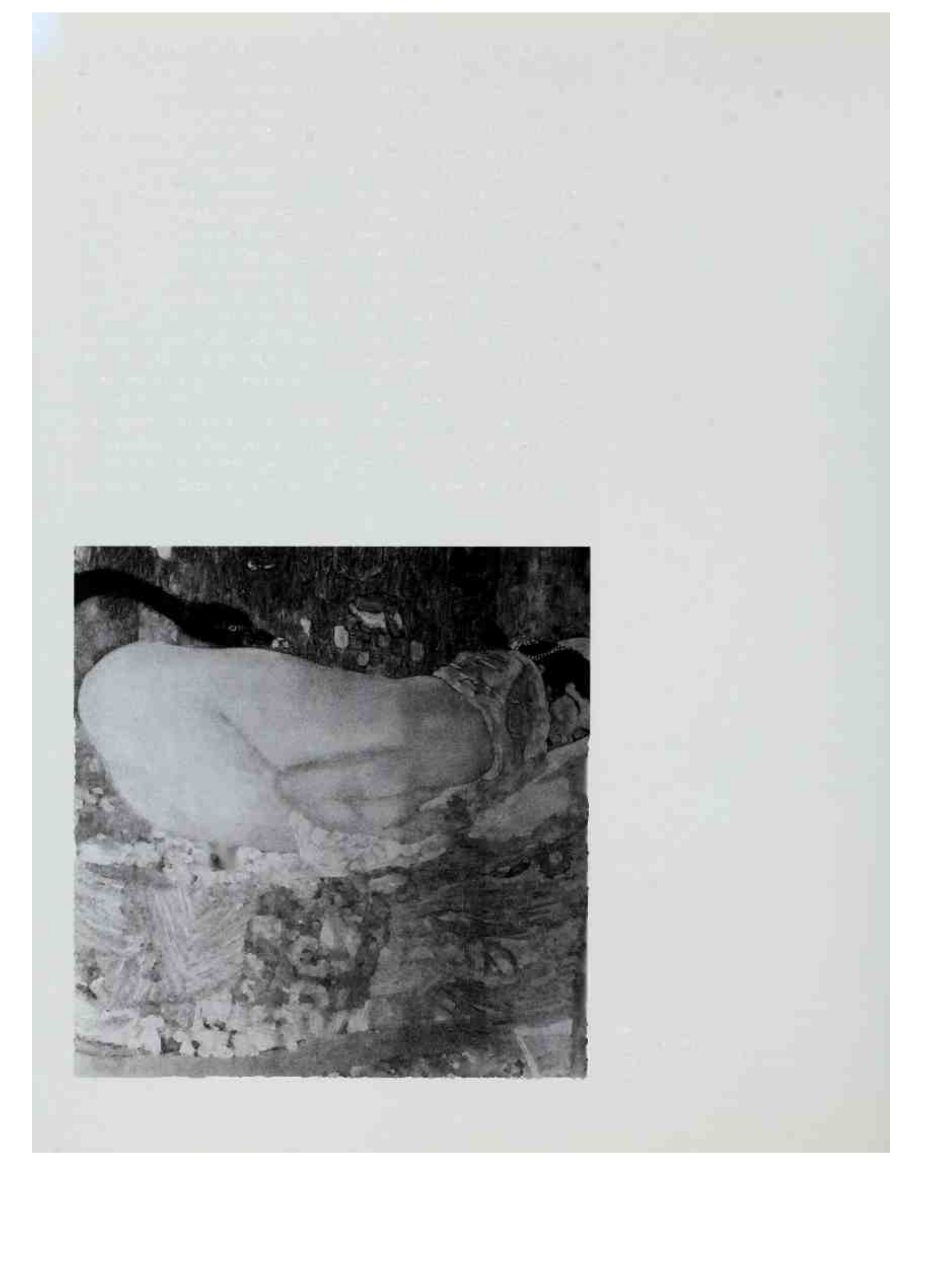






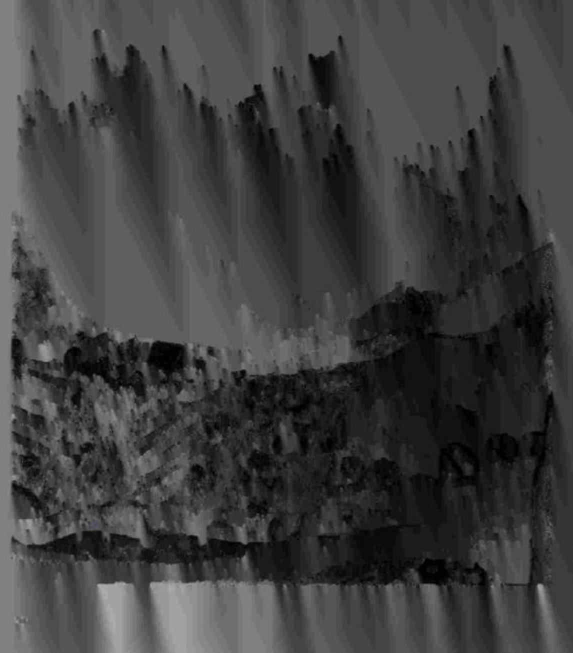




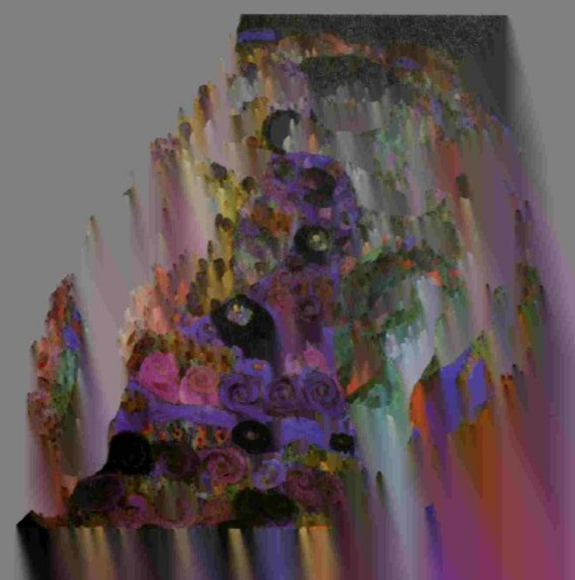


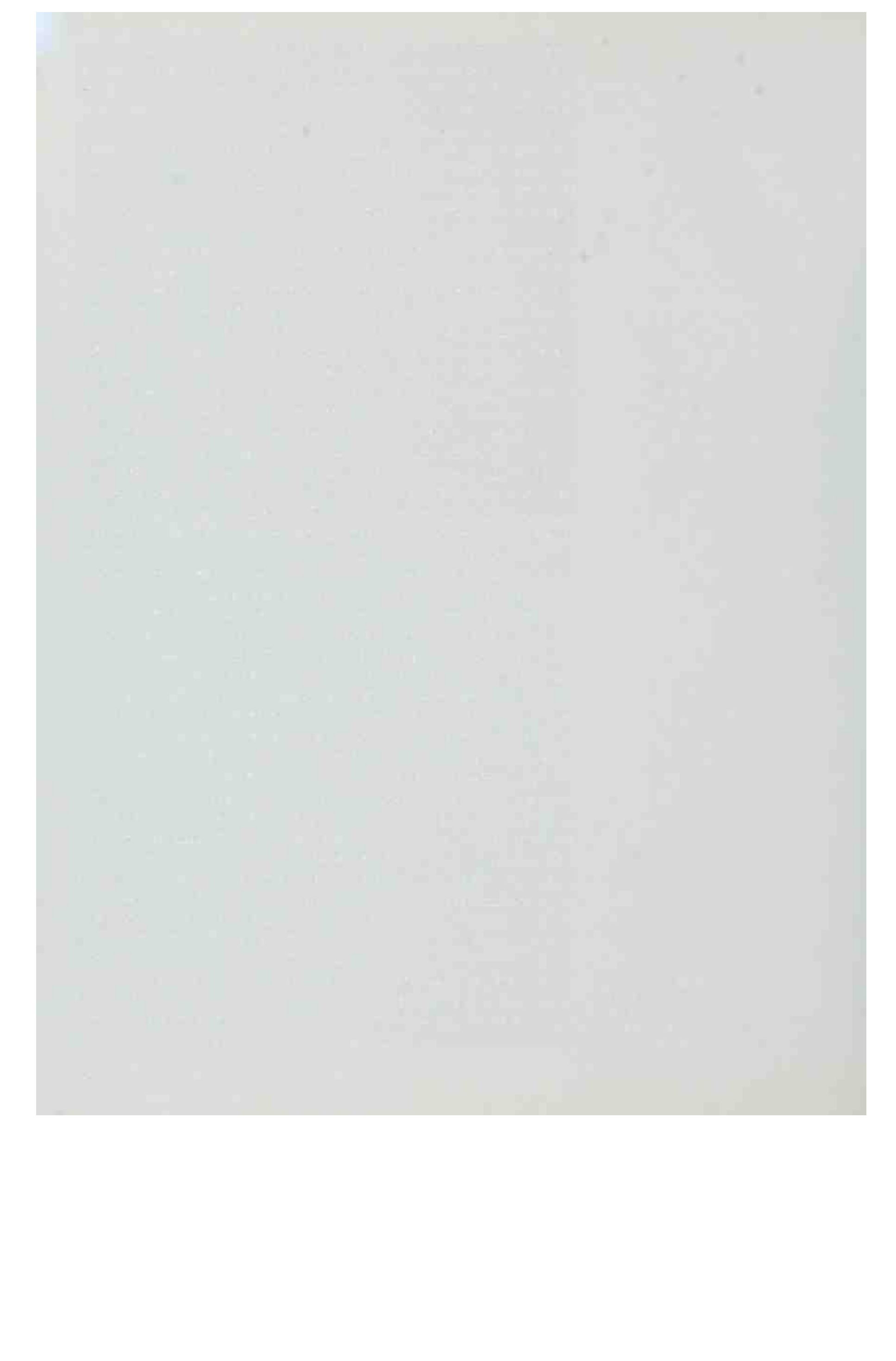
[illegible] of his own feminine aspects. These were [illegible] and depicted as lovely [illegible].

Many of Klimt's contemporaries expressed a great deal of understanding for his [illegible]. They [illegible] not only the extent to which Klimt dealt with the image of Woman in his art, but also the [illegible] to his life as an artist and a person. Their comments showed that they were interested in Klimt's [illegible] and that his image of Woman should be [illegible] as an [illegible] of [illegible] reality but as a "creation" that went beyond the realm of [illegible]. "The direction Klimt has taken," said Hans Tietze, "[illegible] much more [illegible] in his portraits of women. Klimt has experienced woman [illegible] profoundly, and [illegible] each woman from within himself. He has projected himself into every contour of her body, her dress, every smile and every movement. Following her, he has captured every expression of her vitality, but what he paints and draws is [illegible] of reality. His type of woman is both [illegible] and [illegible]. It is the [illegible] of an artist. This [illegible] in the subject and his mastery of it [illegible] makes Klimt a prophet of female beauty." Another contemporary, Berta Zuckerkandl, commented that "Klimt paints the woman of his time. Down to the most secret fibers of her

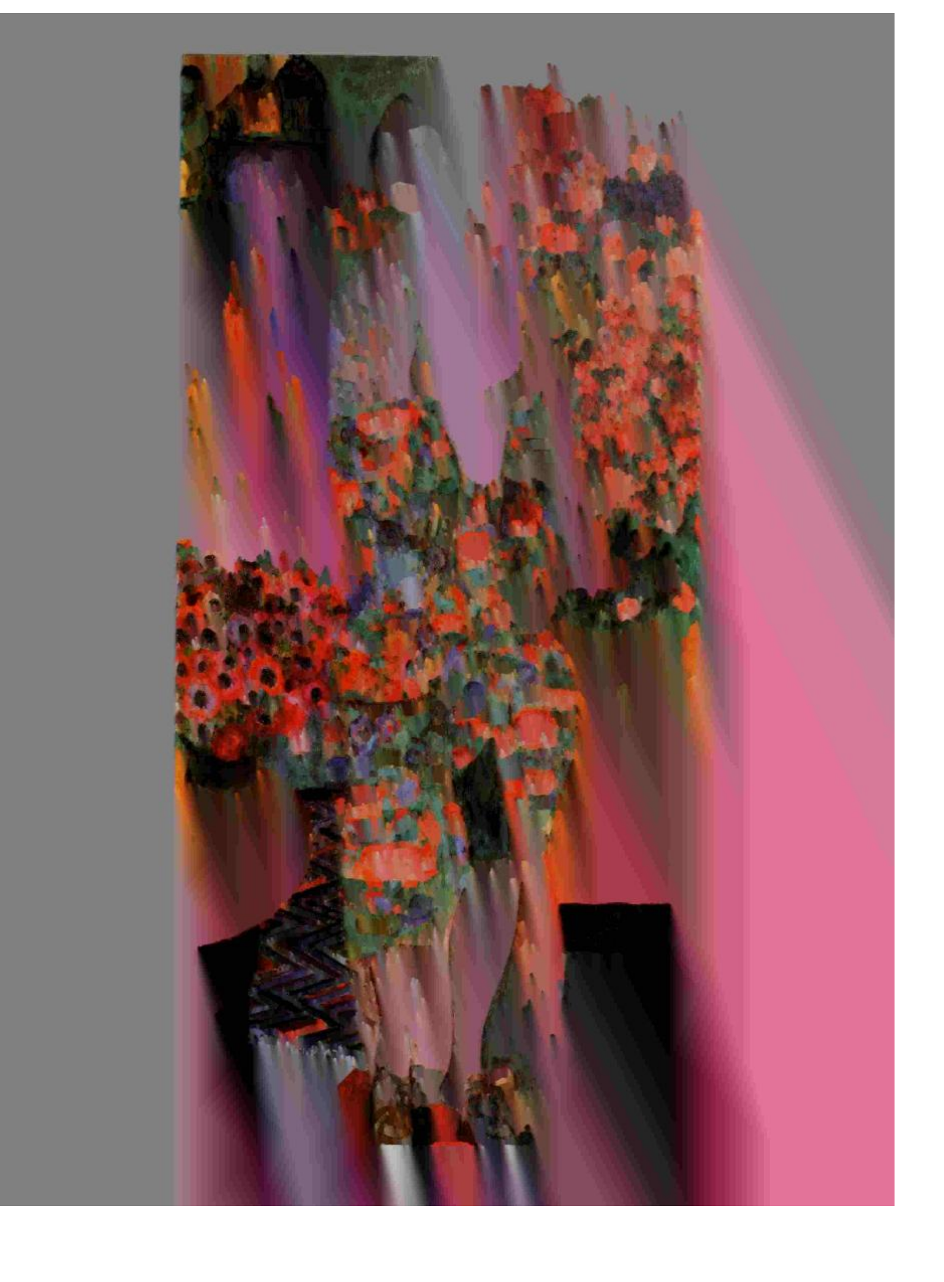






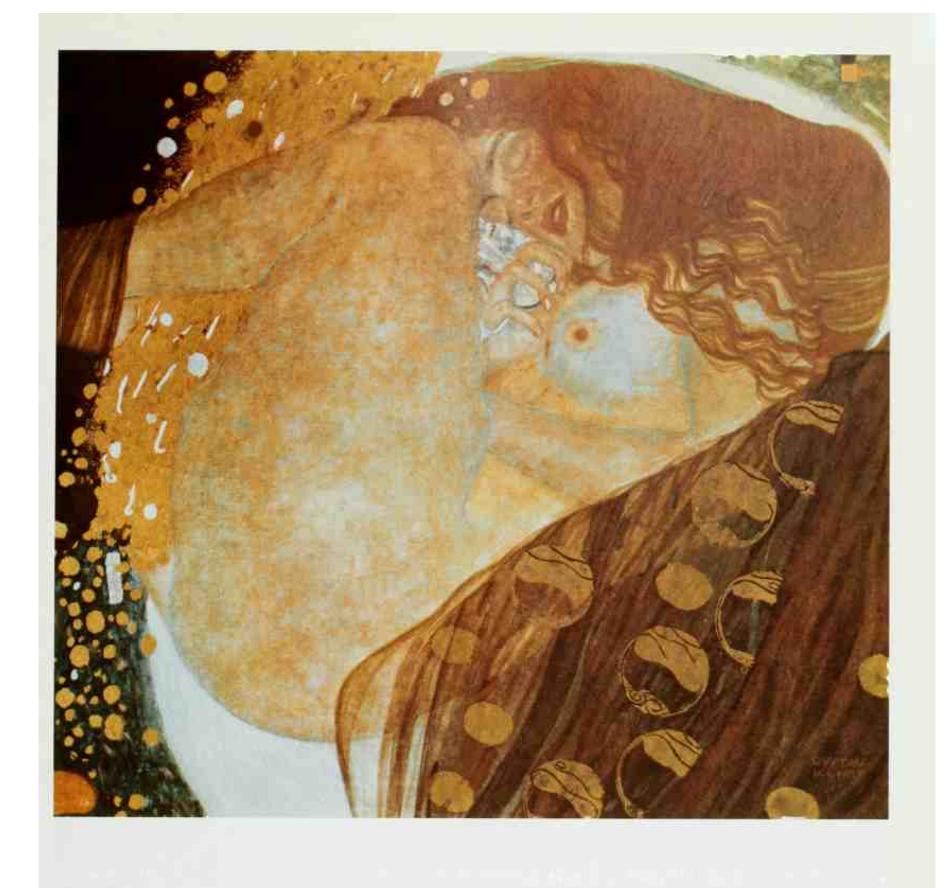


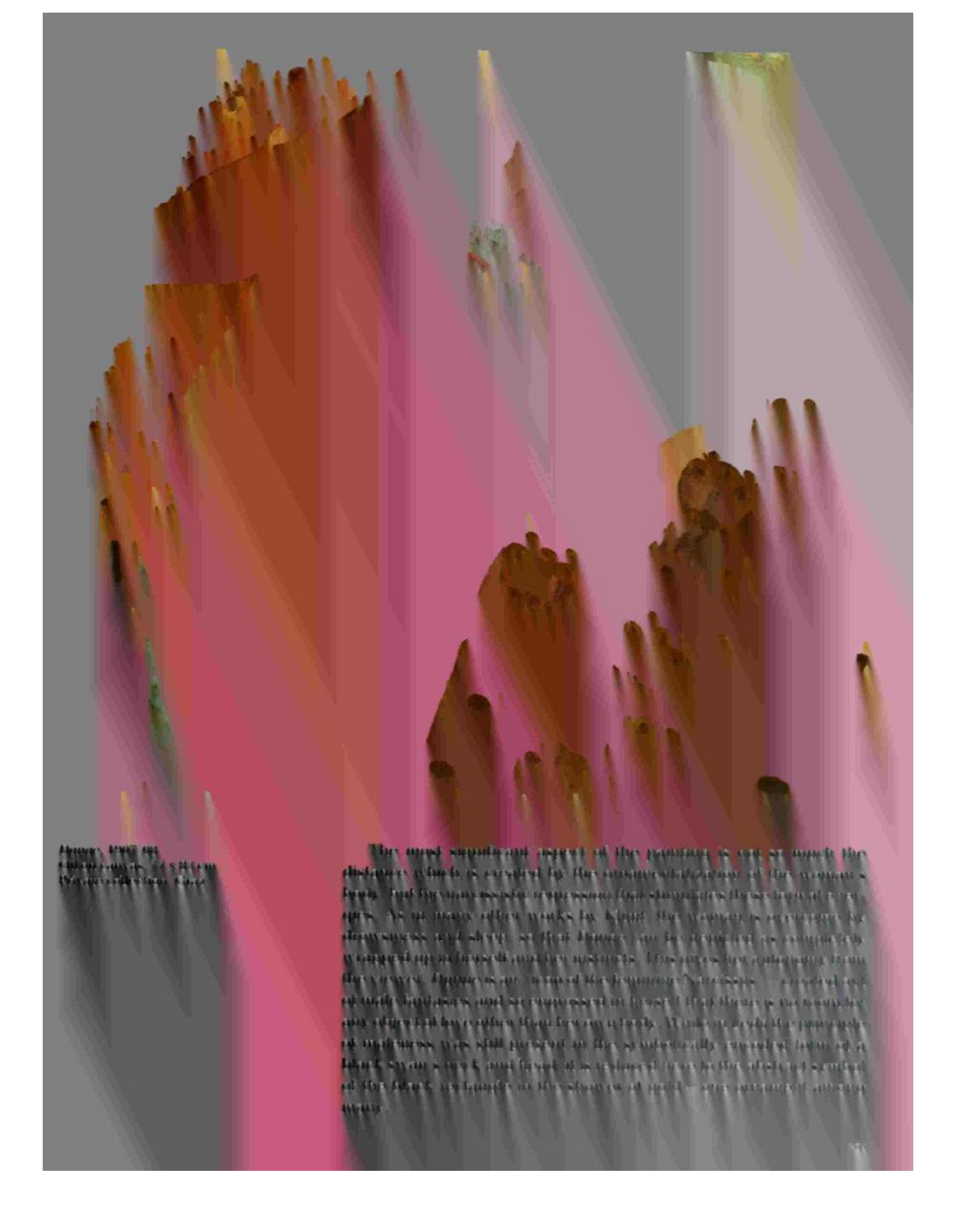




Danae

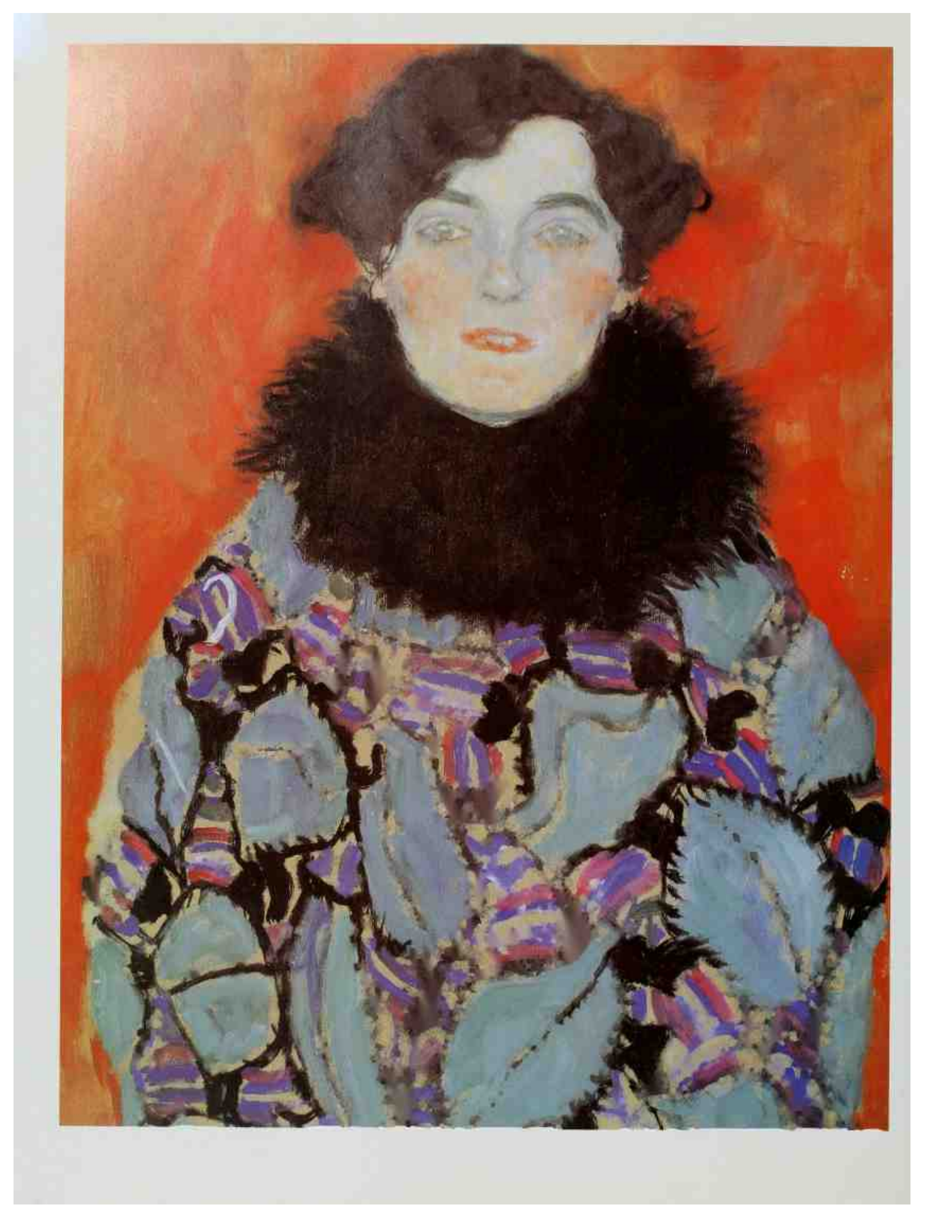
The legend of Danae, who was loved by Zeus in the form of a gold [illegible]

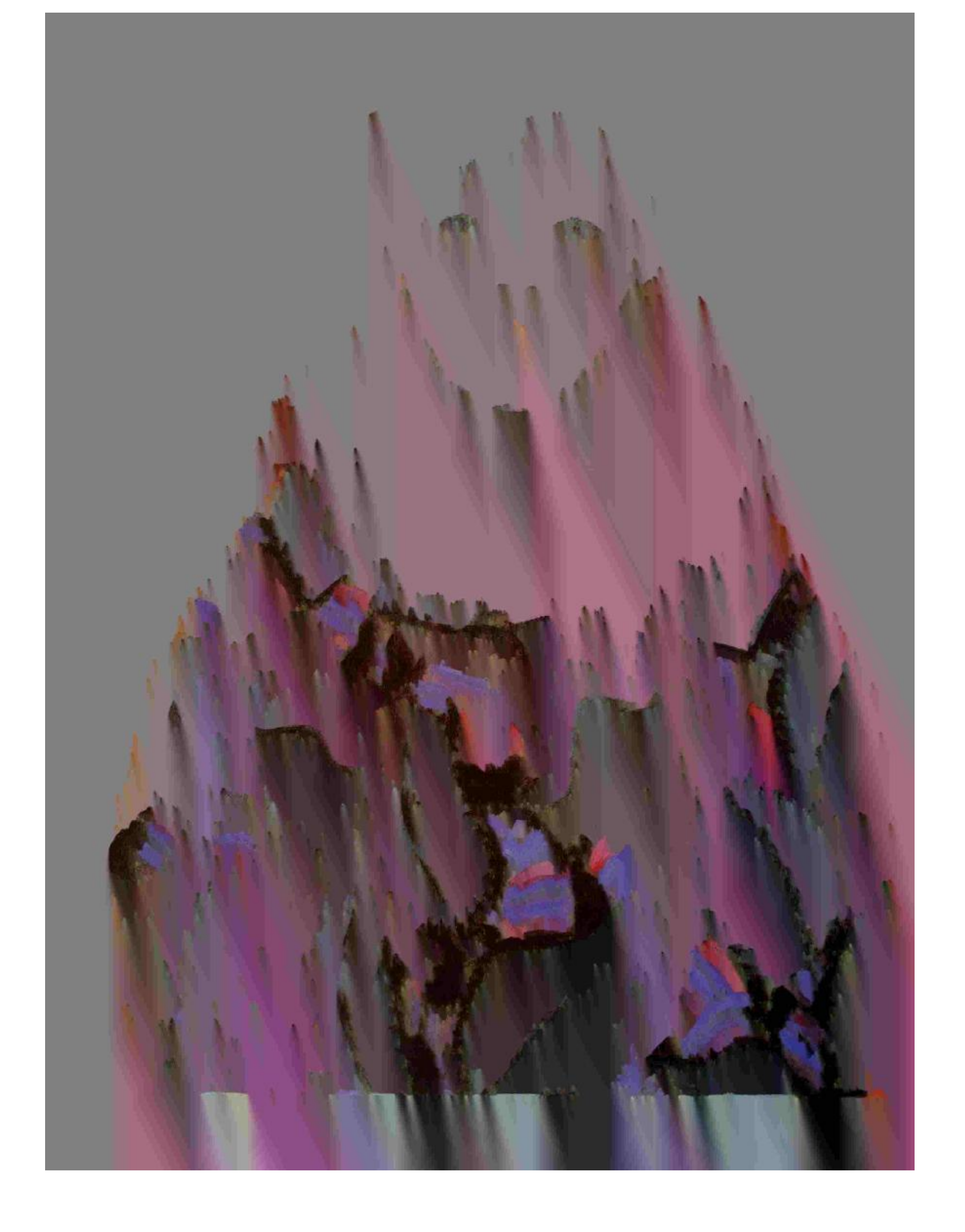




[illegible]

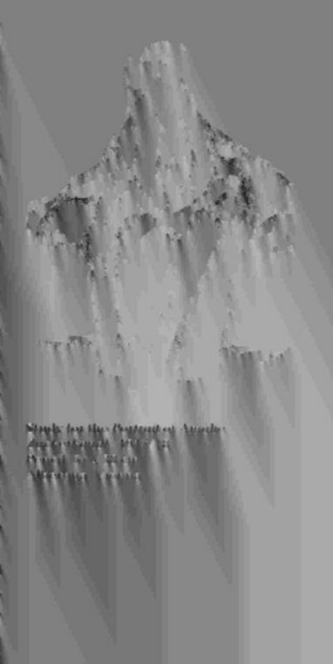
The most significant aspect of the painting is not so much the distance which is created by the [illegible] of the woman's body [illegible]. As in many other works by Klimt, the woman is [illegible] by drowsiness and sleep, so that [illegible] can be regarded as completely wrapped up in [illegible]. [illegible] the viewer. [illegible] Narcissus [illegible] [illegible]

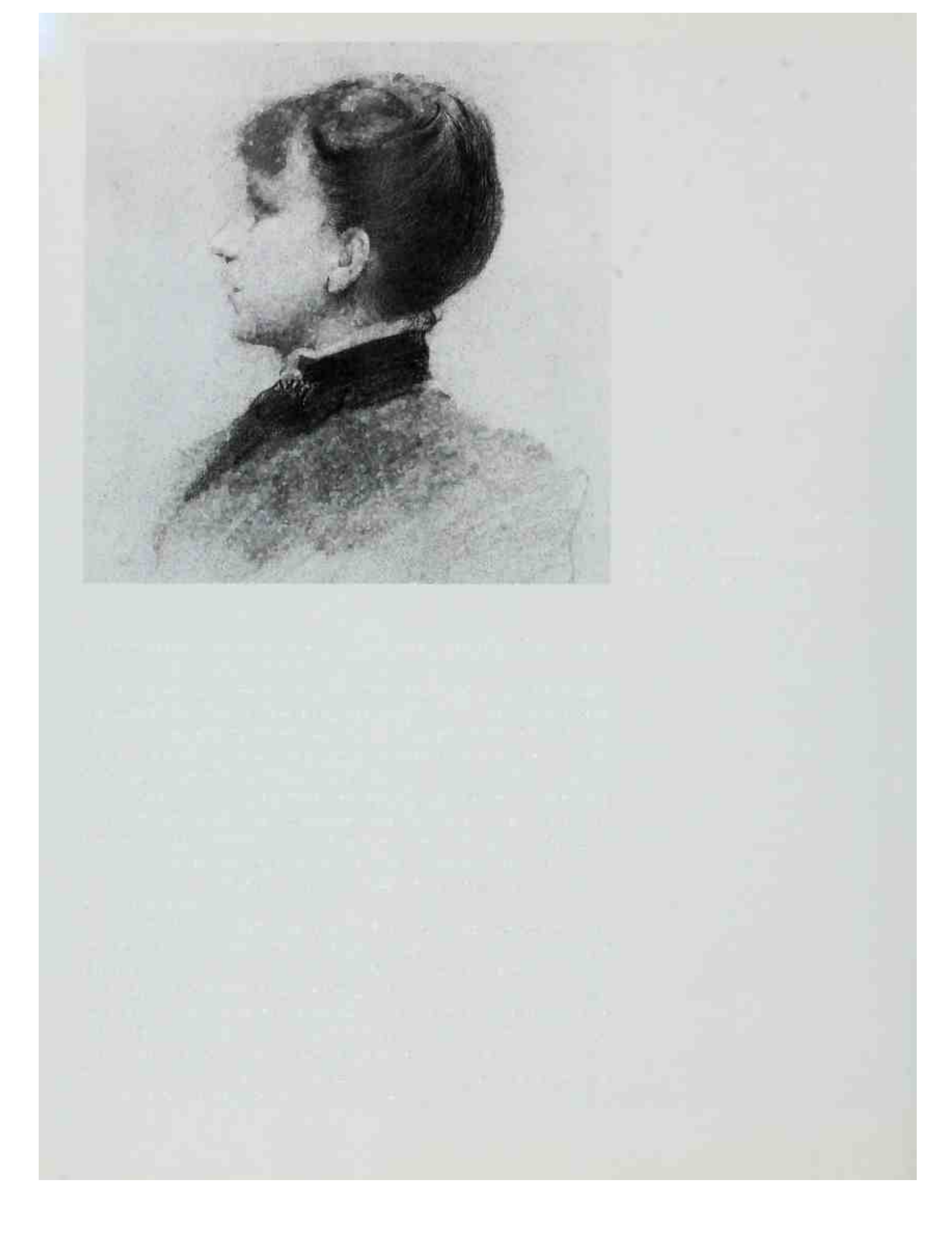






Ladies' Portraits







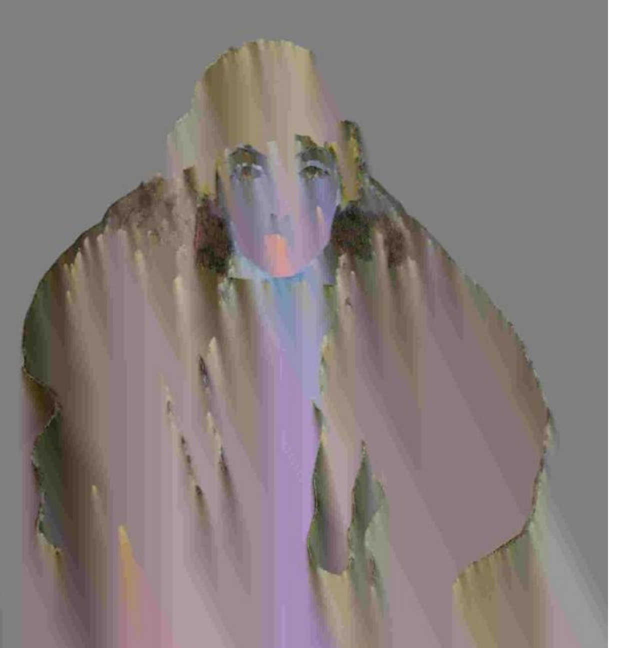
[illegible]

willingness and reticence, it is no longer possible to grasp his portraits in an objective way." [illegible]

However, this needs to be qualified, because Klimt did indeed distinguish between different degrees, [illegible] of allegorical and mythical depictions to those of official portraits, [illegible] analysis of the colours in Klimt's *Portrait of* [illegible] [illegible] has discovered that the complex relationship between closeness and distance is reflected in the relationship between the transparency and density of the paint and the artist's treatment of colours. [illegible] and transparent. [illegible]

[illegible]





Woman's Head, 1917–18
Unfinished
Oil on canvas, 67 x 56 cm
Wolfgang Gurlitt Museum, Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz

which naturalistic depictions of the subject's face, features and hands predominate. As a result of this permanent juxtaposition between naturalistic and decorative two-dimensional elements, Klimt emphasised a woman's gestures and features and thereby also her expression, character and the significance of her personality. On the other hand, however, these parts of the body also appear like fragments or [illegible] elements, subtly detached from the rest of the body.

The argument which [illegible] between two- and three-dimensional space, has its Secessionist analogy in these works, sometimes at the price of losing plausible unity. However, the fragmentation of the objects depicted always had a decorative purpose and never disrupted their phenomenological integrity.

The impact of the naturalistic faces is further enhanced by ornamental surrounds in the form of halos, crowns or hats. Another [illegible] these [illegible] structure of two-dimensional ornamental areas as it were [illegible] (*Emilie Flöge*, 1902; *Fritz Riedler*, 1906; *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, 1907; pp. [illegible] and [illegible]).

The increasing use of ornaments in Klimt's portraits was a gradual development. The ladies portrayed become more and more [illegible] [illegible] "anonymous" ladies' portraits was not the entire body, which is never made superfluous, but the [illegible]





Woman with Hat and Boa ...

shifted onto the ornaments (in a similar way to The Kiss). Furthermore, the ornaments add an element of material luxury and preciousness to these ladies' lives, as if their status were much higher than is suggested by the photographs of the same persons. And unlike these photographs, despite the detailed naturalism, each lady is an ornament who keeps her face and name ...

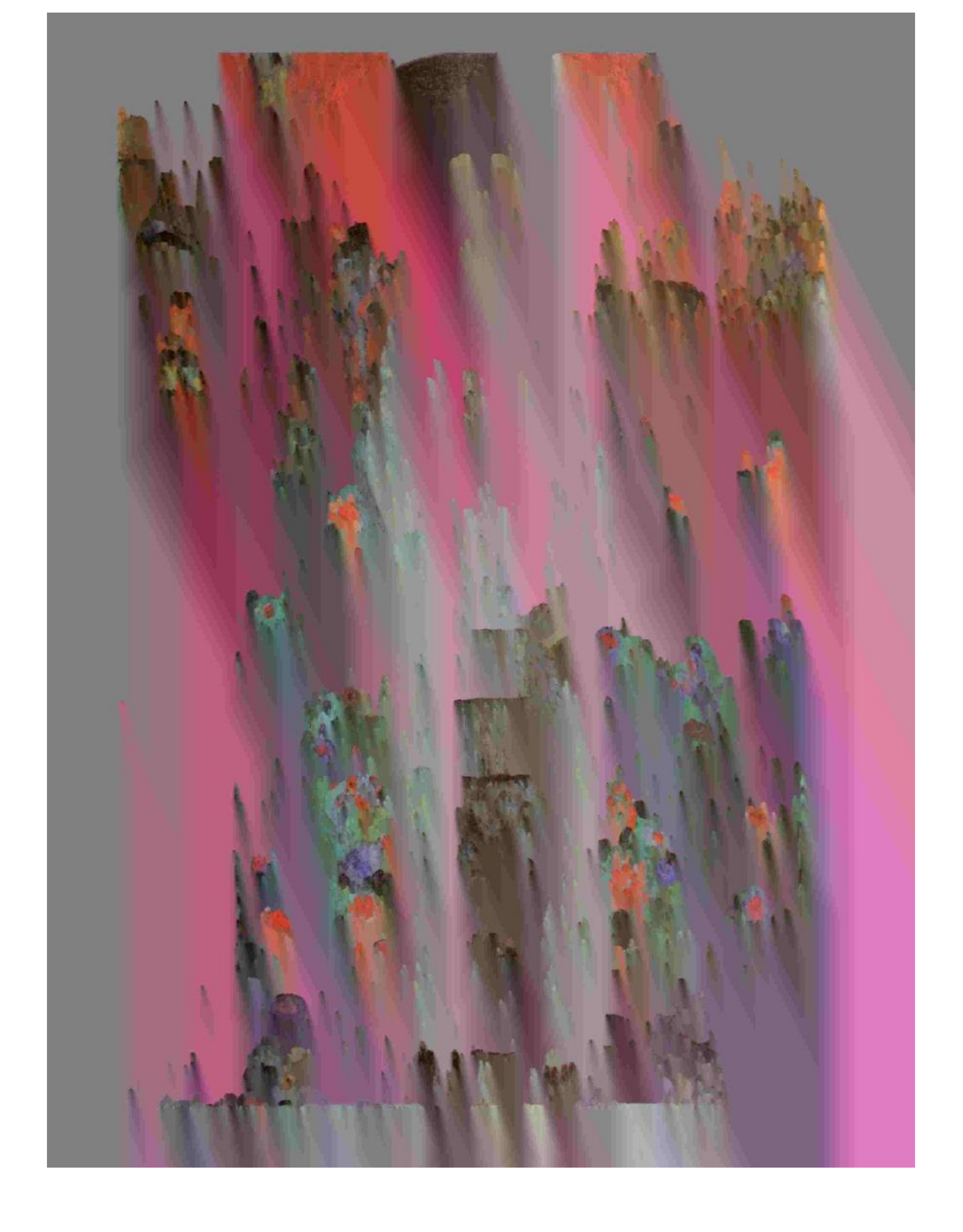
This aura is further emphasized by a low-angle "look", that is, being viewed from below, which makes the depicted person seem slightly raised. The extreme lengthening of some figures, who appear to be looking at us from a somewhat higher position, also serves to stress their distance as exclusive society ladies. Their ornamental garments are meant as a reflection of their social prestige. Thus, the portrait has become a way of keeping distance in the person portrayed as well as distance for the viewer, a certain majestic stateliness which may not always be due to their social positions and which has been accorded to them by the artist. That such an elevation sometimes made these ladies feel rather uneasy can be gathered from the rejection of Klimt's *Portrait of Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein* by her family and the reworking of a portrait of ... In his speech, Hermann Bahr tried to interpret these portraits as showing something of the "innermost nature of each lady" ..., but this is precisely what his portraits conceal. And indeed, they do so by means of wealth – a wealth which manifests itself in status, costumes and golden ornaments. The true personality and nature of the ladies – including their coolness – only ever shines through very indirectly and as if it had been fragmented by the ornaments.

Despite his rather exaggerated and abstract enthusiasm, Peter Altenberg has nevertheless discovered a very important feature of Klimt's portraits: rather than portraying the ladies, they "idolize" them and put them into a contextual unreal existence. Altenberg therefore sees them as part of Klimt's endless programmatic typology of womanhood: "These ladies' portraits are like the perfect creations of nature's most tender imagination. Delicate, tired, impassioned, fragile creatures ... Their hands are the expression of a noble soul, with a hint of child-like vitality ...

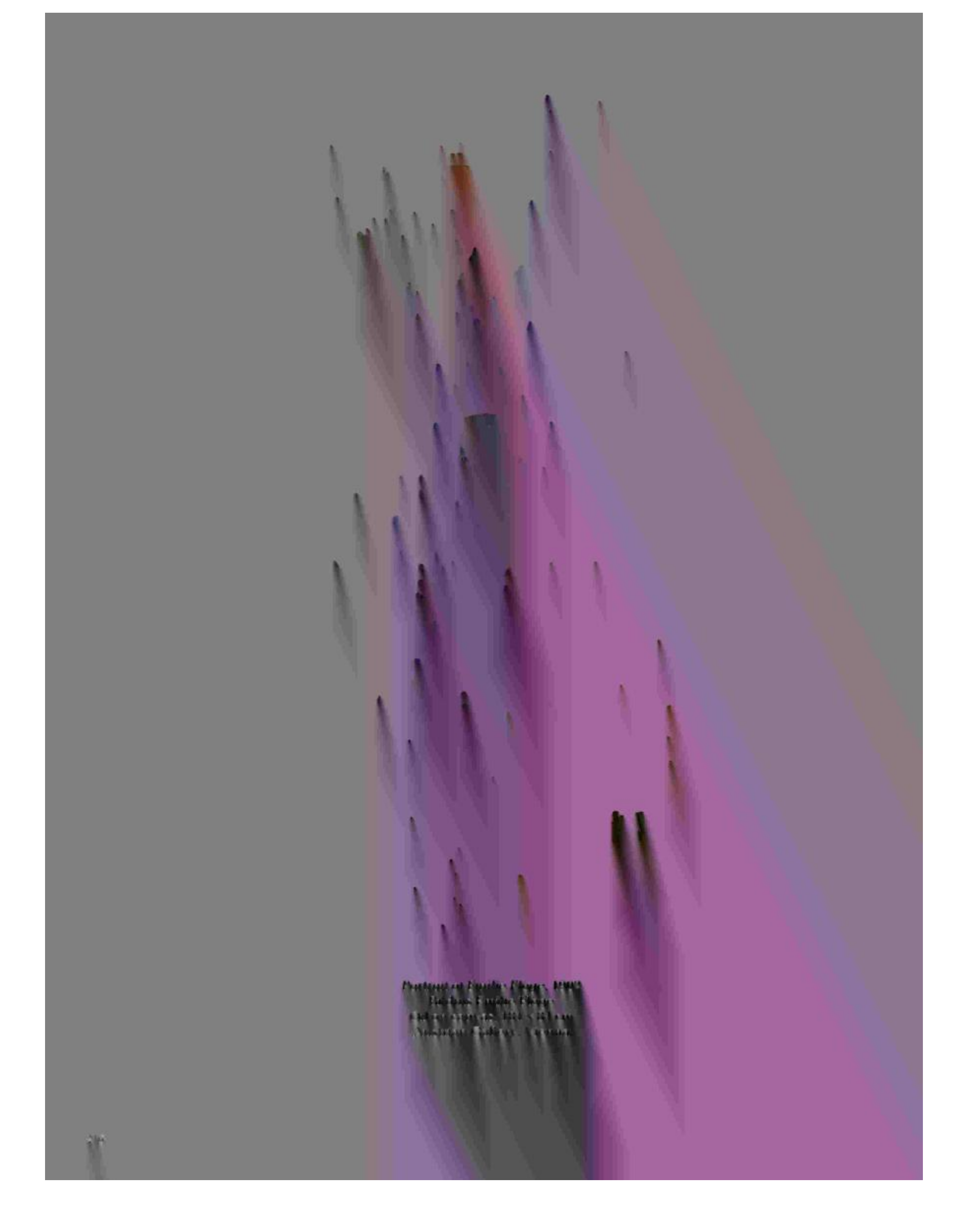
"Whatever their positions may be at a certain hour or on a certain day in real life, they are all outside earth's sphere ... All of them are princesses in a better and more delicate world. The painter realized this, he did not allow himself to be confused and he raised them in their rightful position, in their own high and lofty ideals! ... These are the aspects that count in the artist's eyes. This is how the woman should be seen! Staring into the mysteries of existence, proud, unworldly, yet tragically sad ... Except for the beauty of these hands, a beauty that is supernatural and triumphs over life and its manifold sorrows and perversions. These hands say: 'We will remain like this until we are seventy', ... They are not only ... characters ..."

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II, 1912
Bildnis Adele Bloch-Bauer II
Oil on canvas, 190 x 120 cm
Österreichische Galerie, Vienna

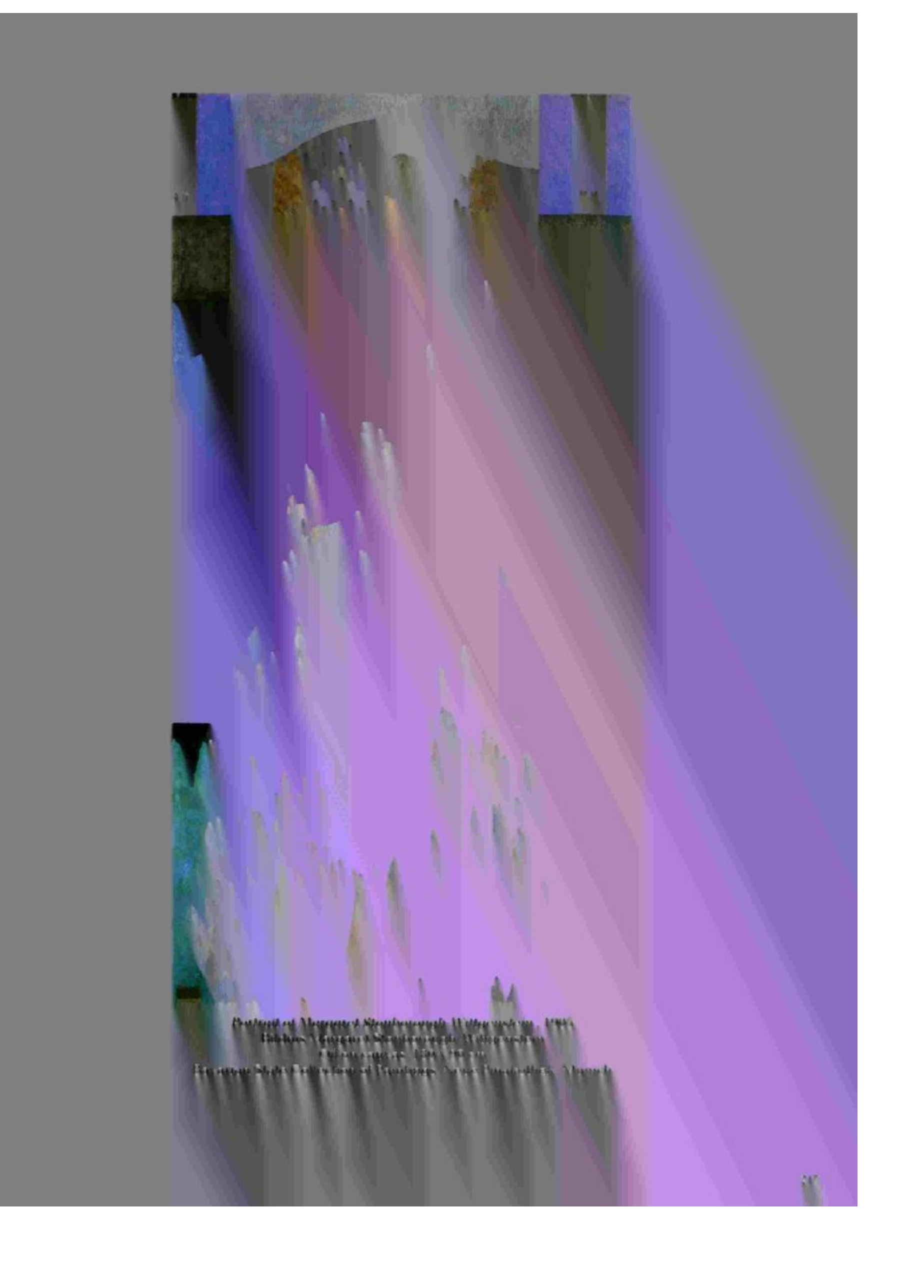


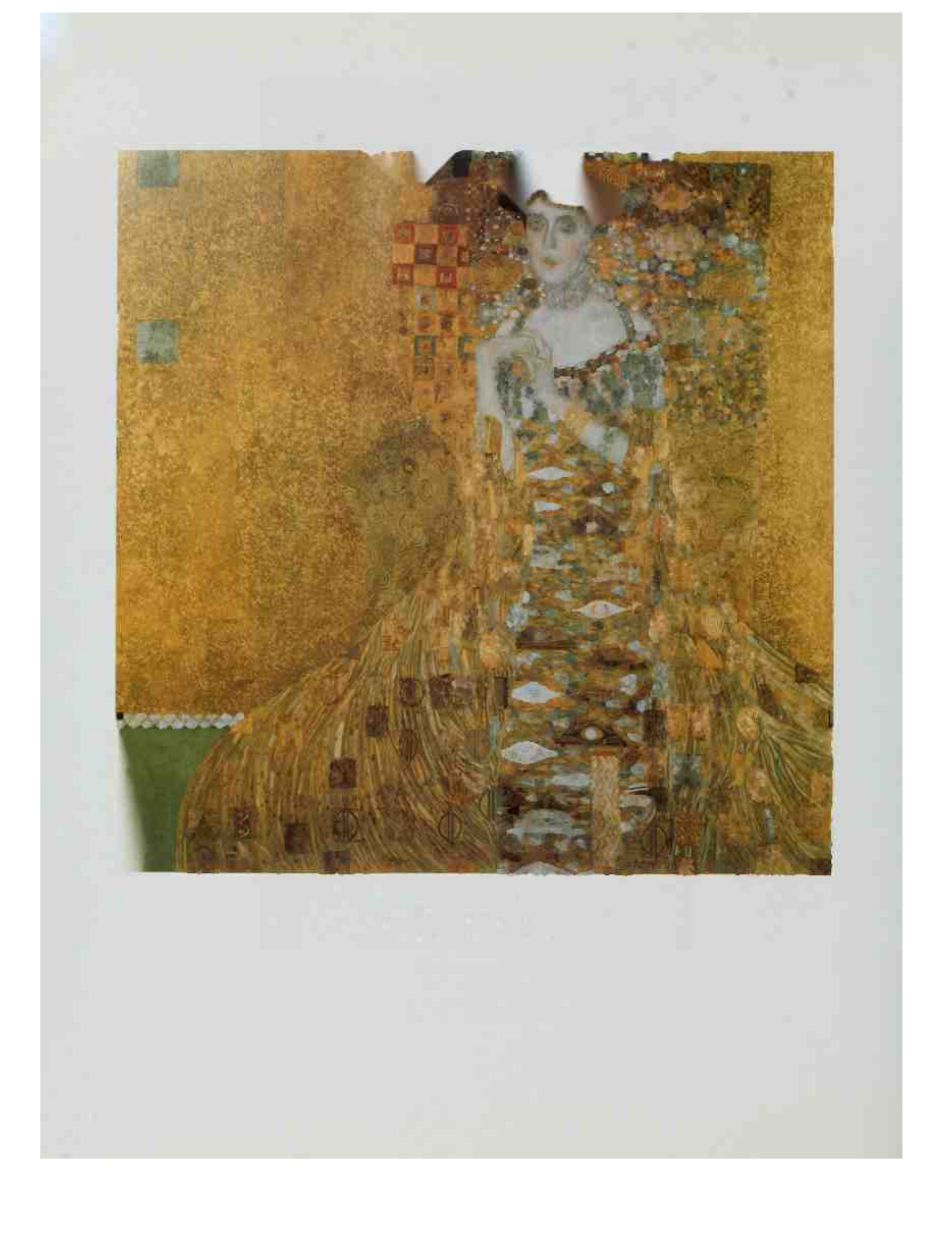


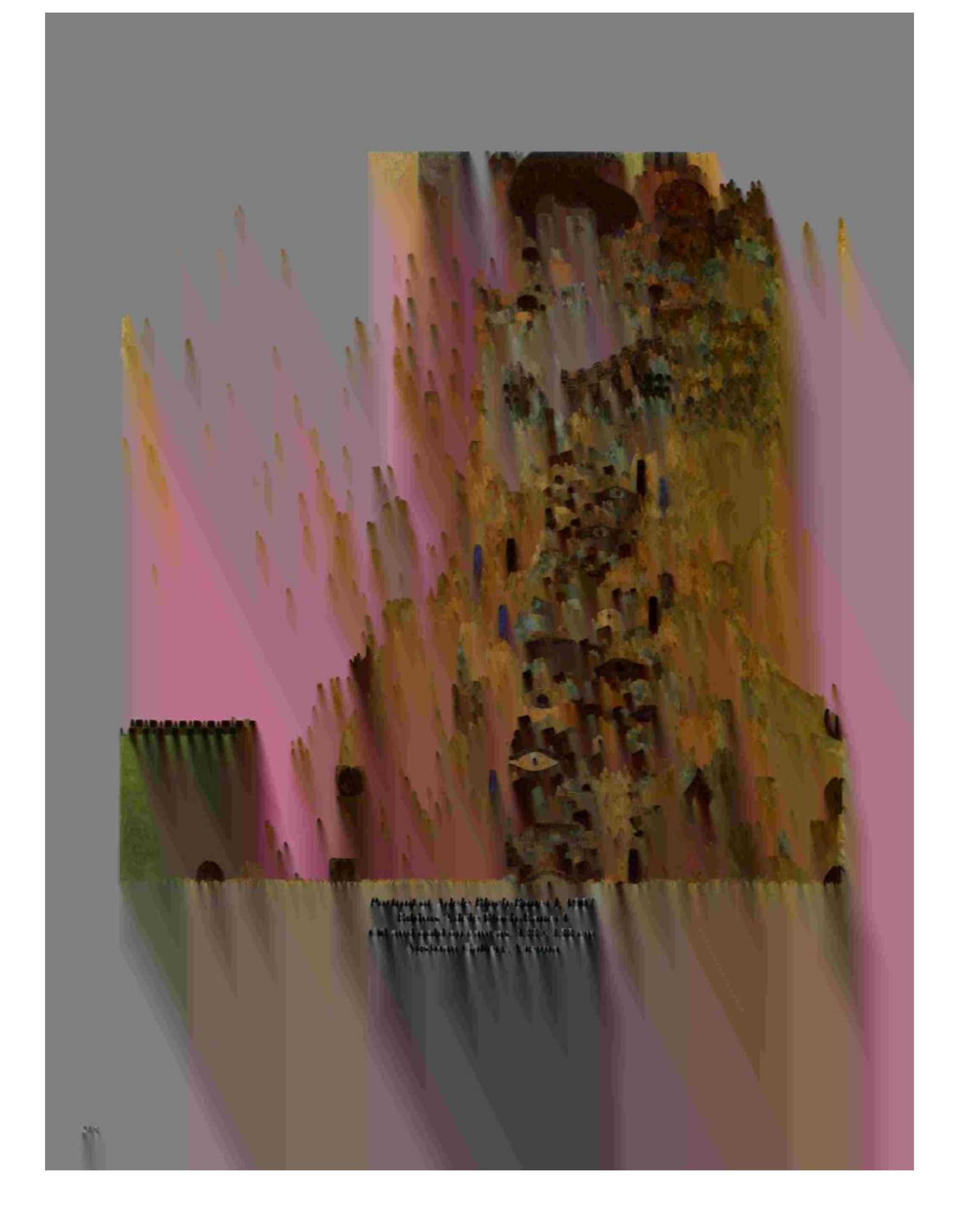




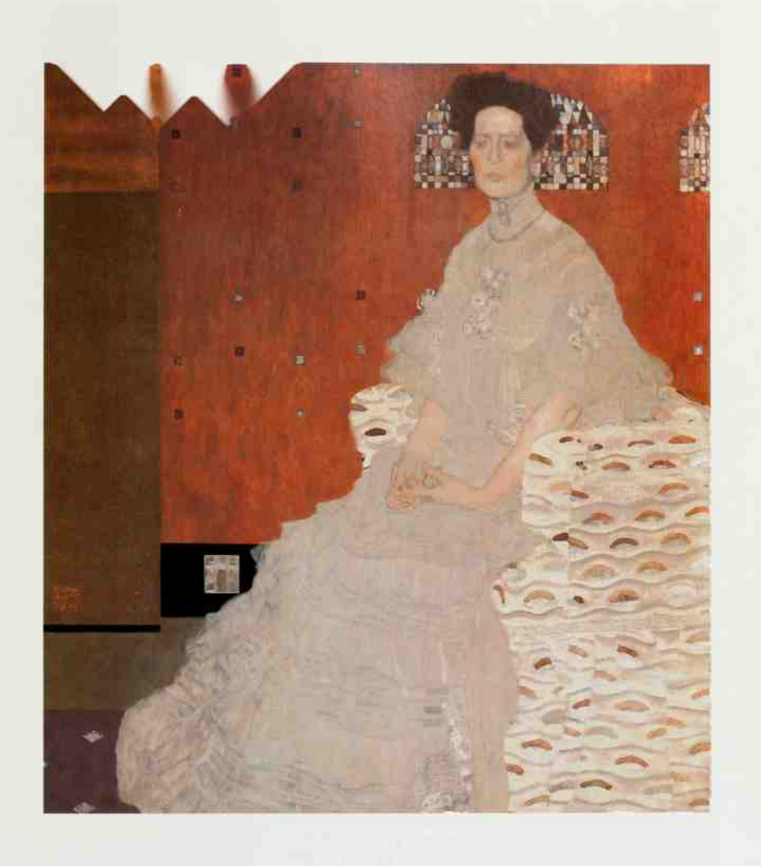


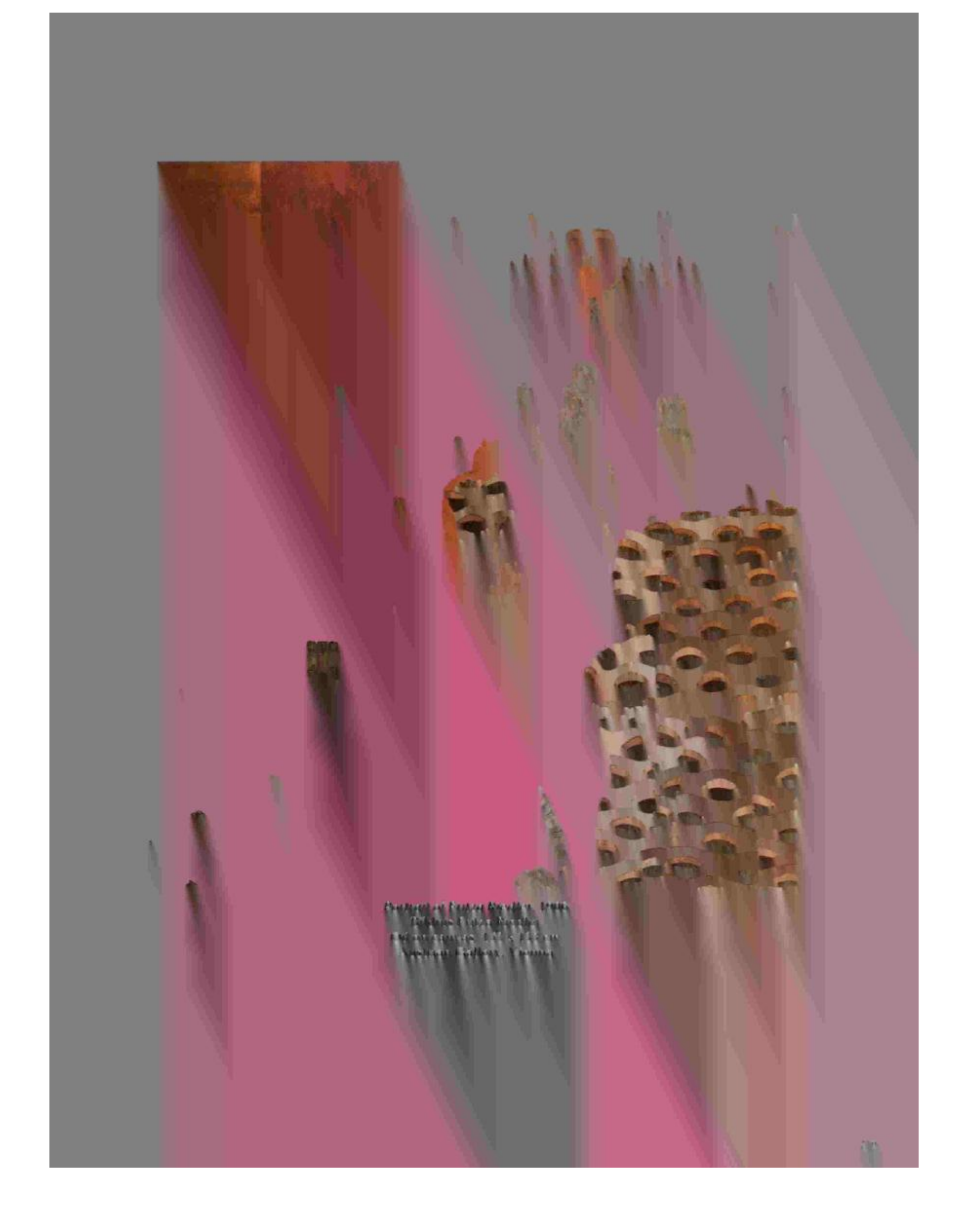




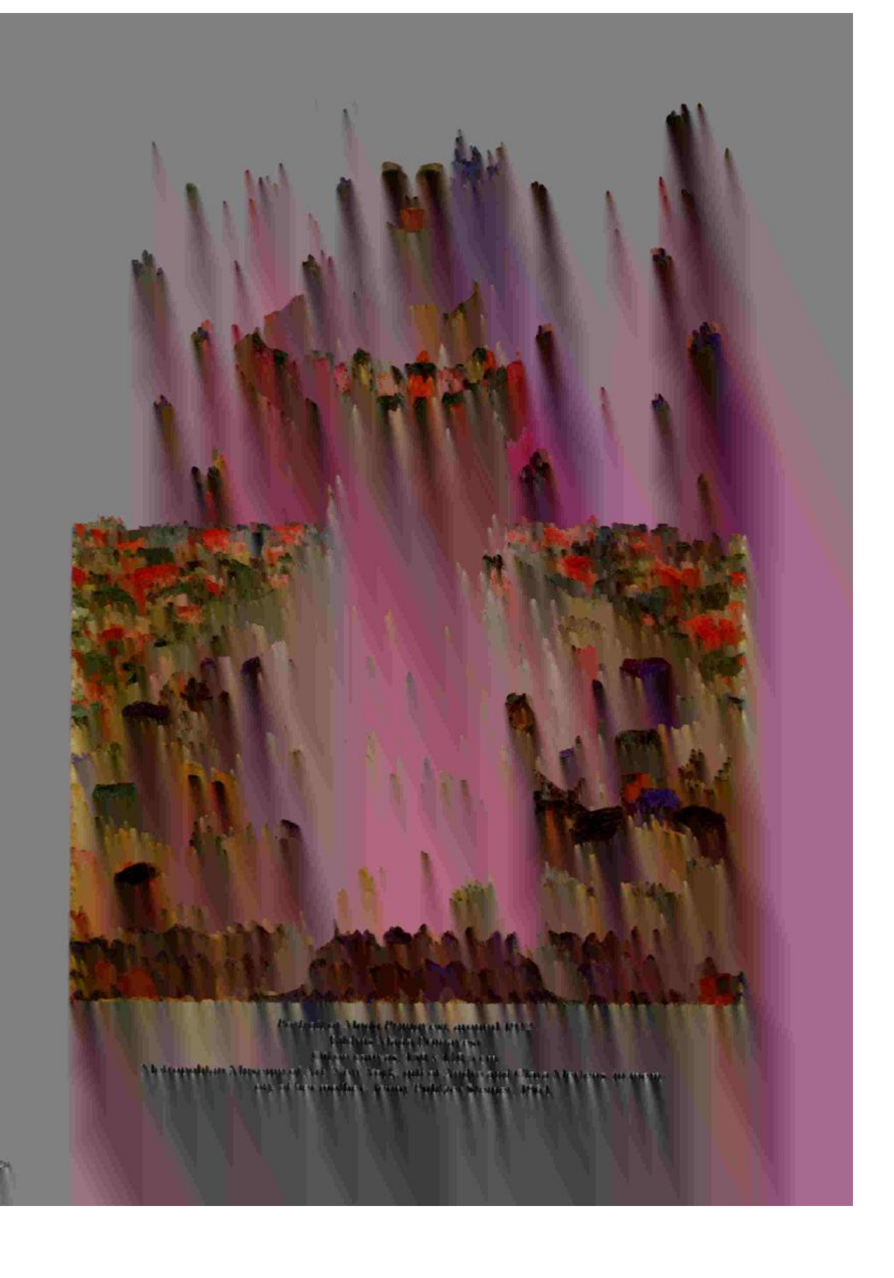


Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I, 1907
Bildnis Adele Bloch-Bauer I
Oil and gold on canvas, 138 x 138 cm
[illegible] Gallery, Vienna



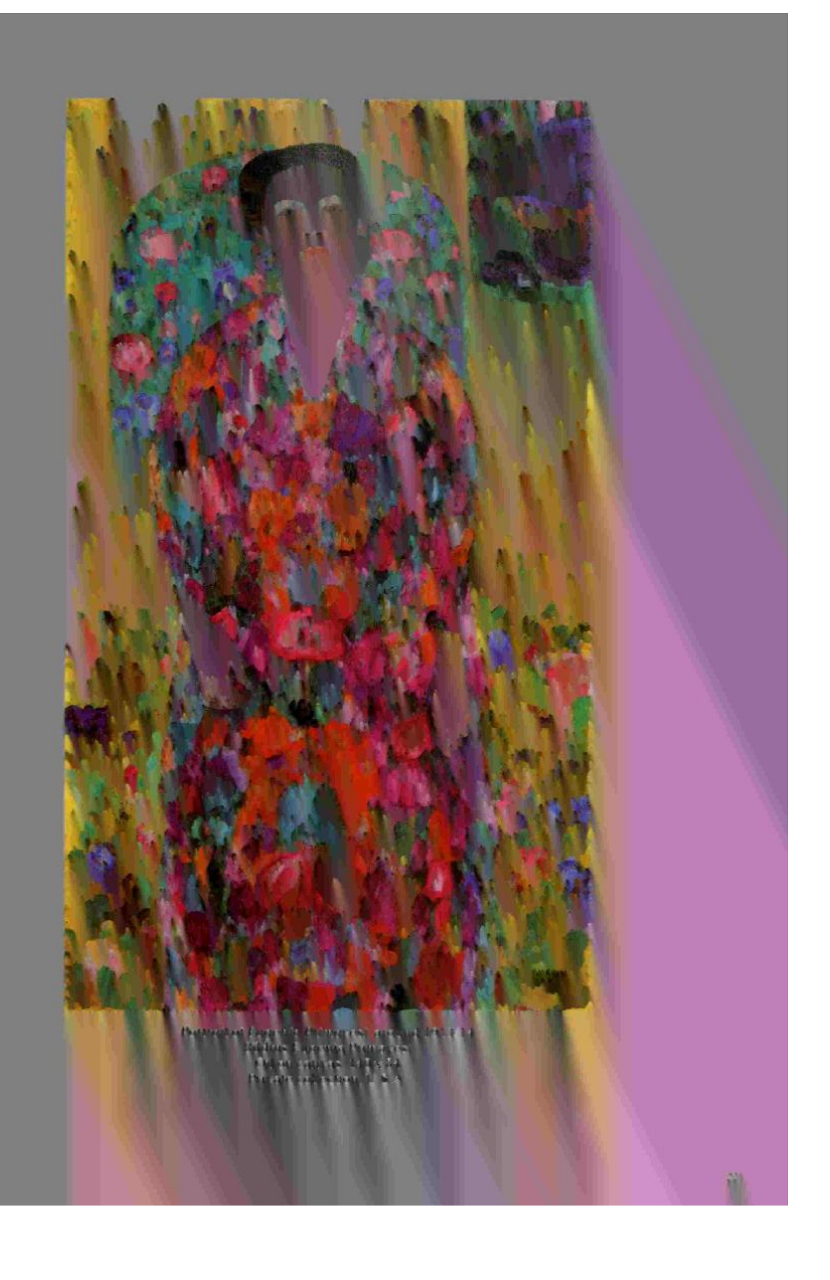




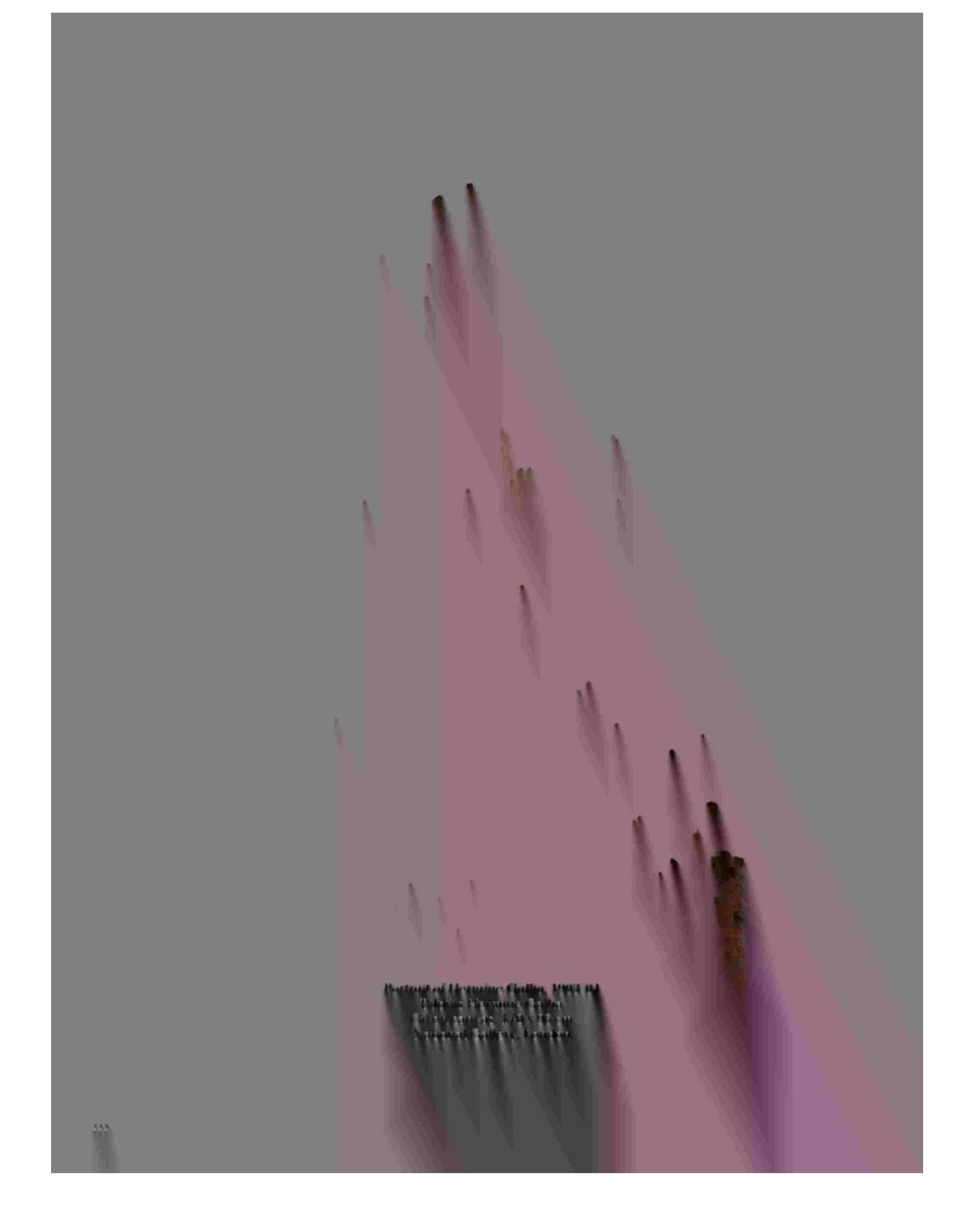


Portrait of Mäda Primavesi, around 1912
Bildnis Mäda Primavesi
Oil on canvas, [illegible] cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of André and Clara Mertens, in memory of her mother, Jenny Pulitzer Steiner, 1964

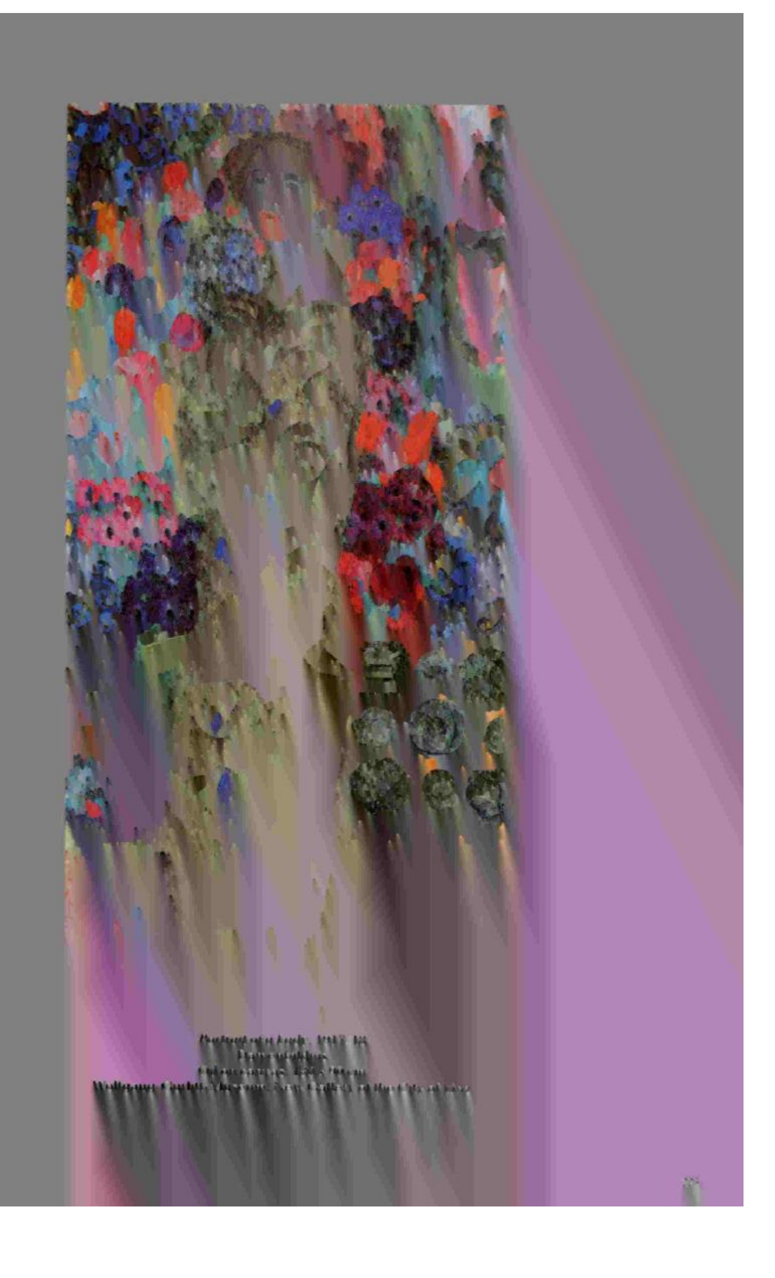


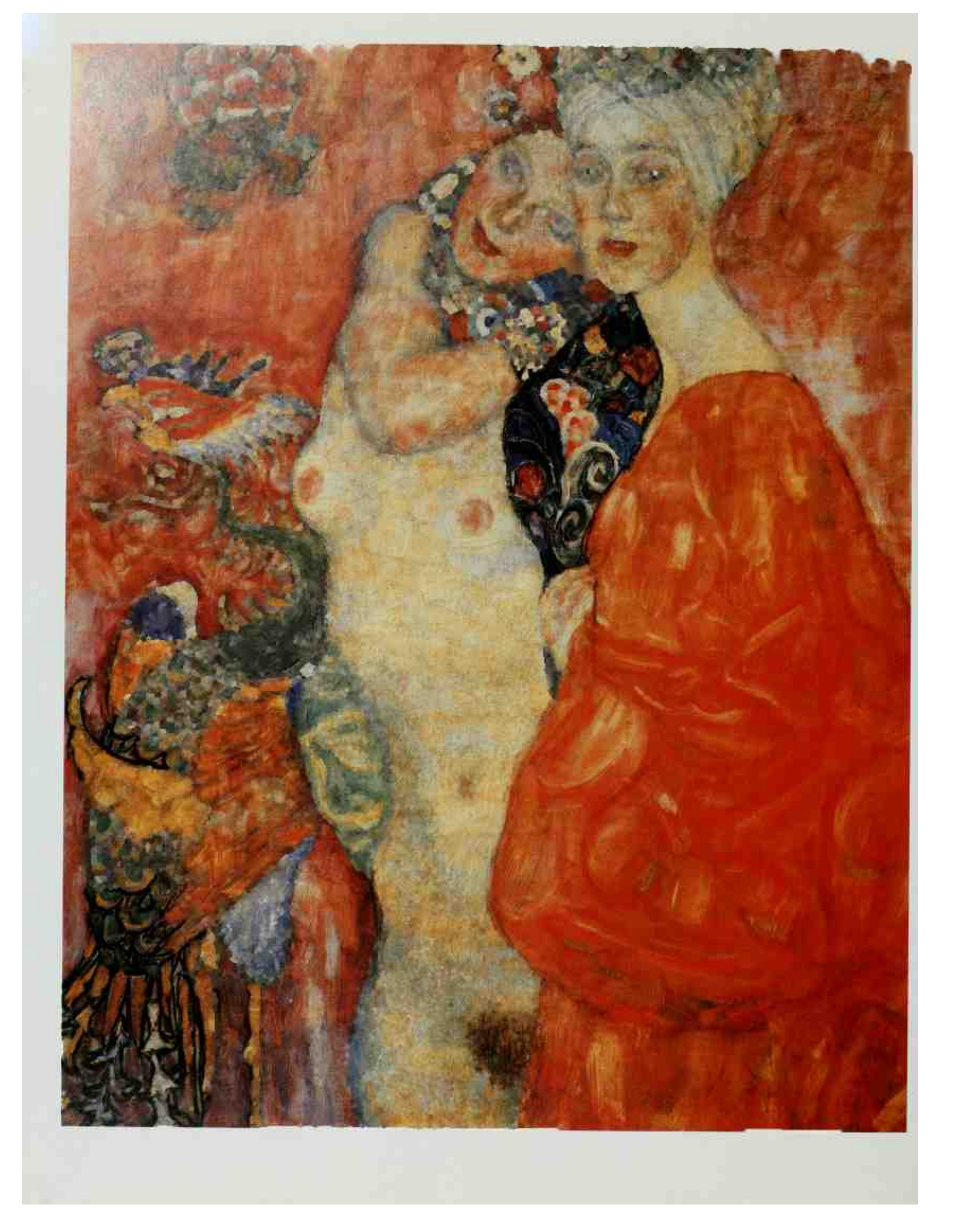


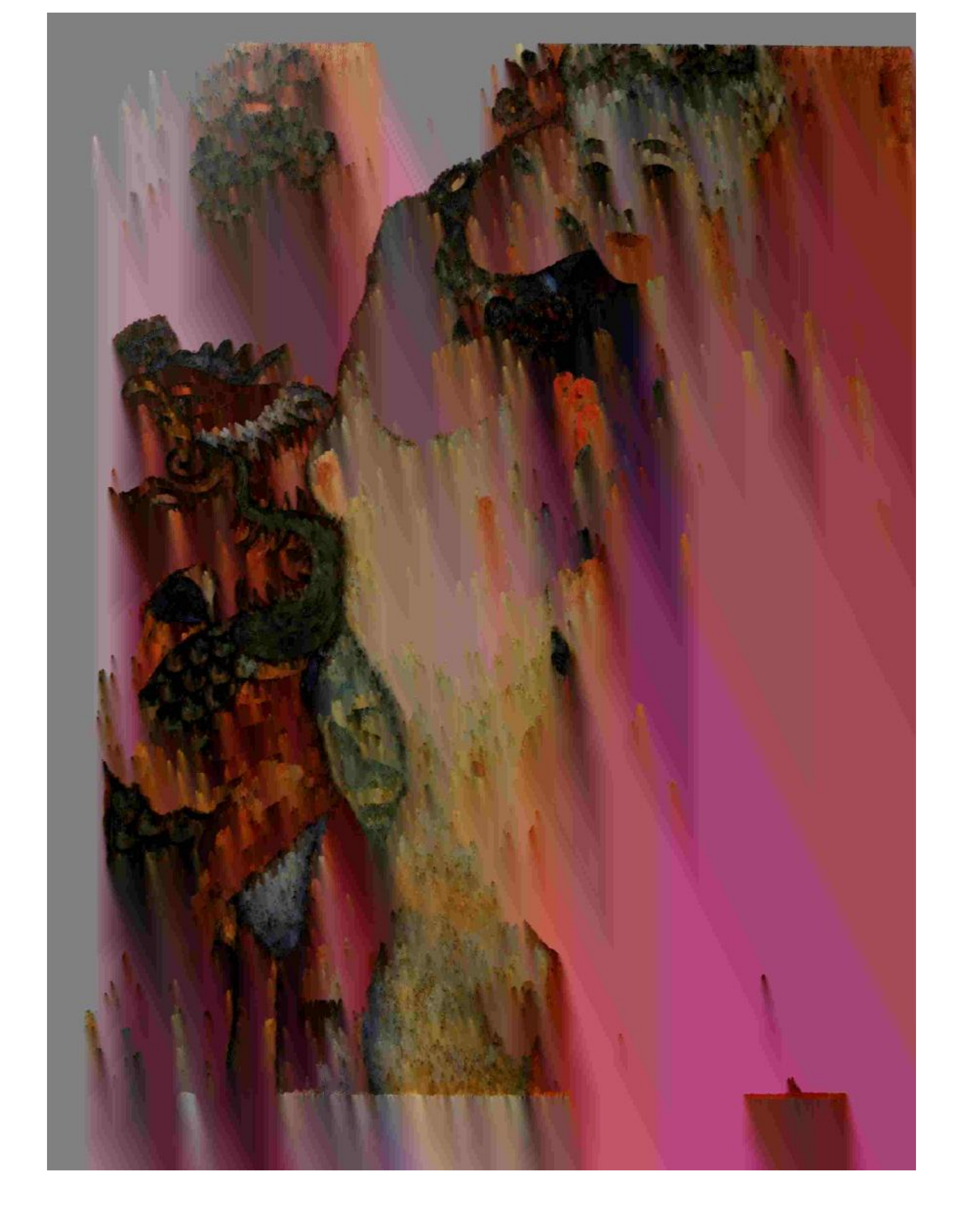


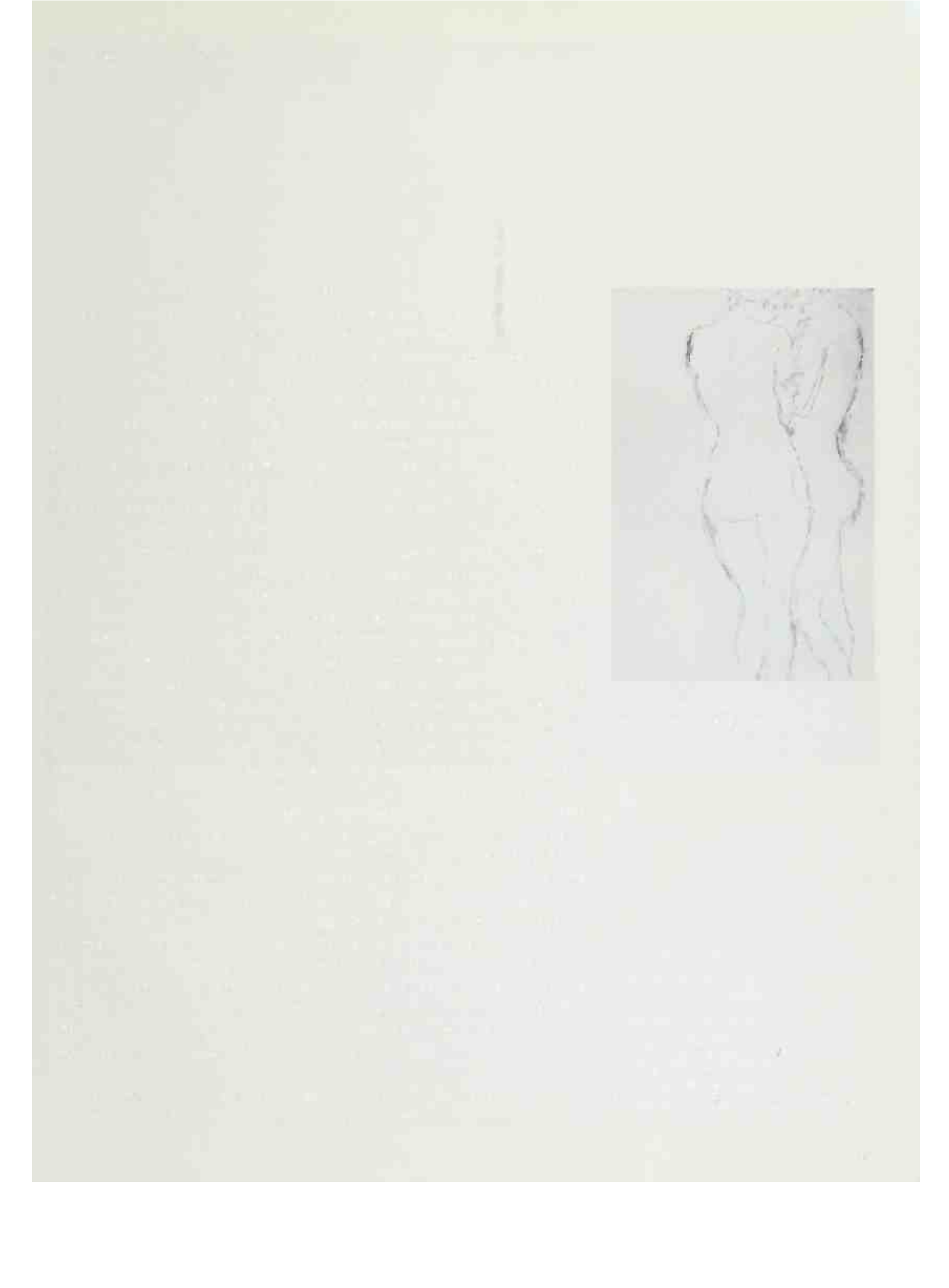




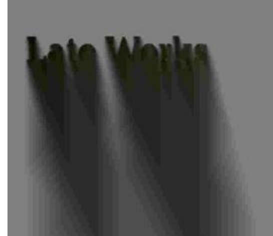








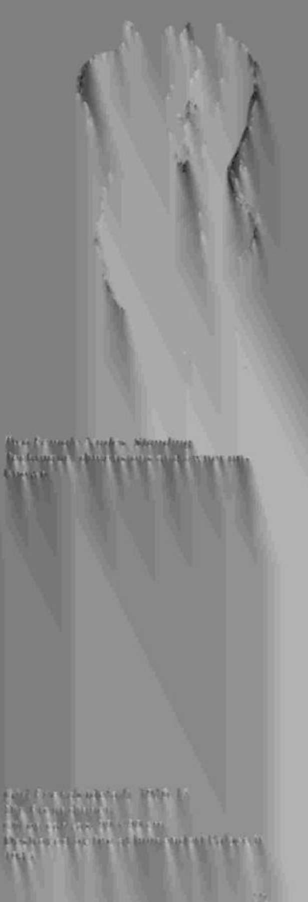
Late Works



When Klimt died on 6th February 1918, a number of unfinished works were found in his studio. These have eluded all interpretation until now, not only because of their fragmentary nature but also their allegorical content. To some extent, they can be seen as further developments of Klimt's sexual and allegorical "humanity paintings" of the "Golden Phase" – a new discussion of the "cycle of life" depicted as a natural and fateful process. Here, however, the cycle is seen more optimistically, and in more expressive terms, without any allusions to social events and institutions, as was the case rather openly (*Family Portrait*, p. [illegible]) or in concealed form (*Hope I*, p. [illegible]) in his "humanity paintings", where the allegory of motherhood was partly treated as a social institution.

What makes it difficult to decode these paintings is the lack of iconographic elements to facilitate such a task. What is more, there is hardly any coherent interaction between the different characters. They are completely absorbed in passivity and emotions. *The Bride* (p. [illegible]) is an exception in that it affords at least a very approximate [illegible] for interpretation in which the figures form part of a natural, biological context, contrasted but without extreme passions or emotions. This is reminiscent of Klimt's metaphor of different ages, painted back in 1905 (*The Three Ages of Woman*, p. [illegible]), and also *Death and Life* (p. [illegible]). These earlier works, however, displayed greater clarity of form as well as content, whereas the late works become increasingly ambiguous in content and loose in form. In his late works the allegorical element is even more obviously permeated by female protagonists than before. They are either absent altogether (*The Three Ages of Woman*; *The Virgin*, p. [illegible]) or – as in Klimt's cyclical "humanity paintings" – they are depicted embracing themselves. Their feelings are not shown and their struggle to live has been banned (*Death and Life*; *Adam and Eve*, p. [illegible]). These paintings, too, may perhaps be understood within the context of man's "self-humanization" – projections of an eternal female nature and culturally coded [illegible]. Through women are totally reduced to their sexuality, just as in Klimt's erotic drawings, both with regard to content and form. All these late paintings are dominated by drowsiness, sleep and a somewhat repressed sensuousness, without hope of an awakening that might bring relief.

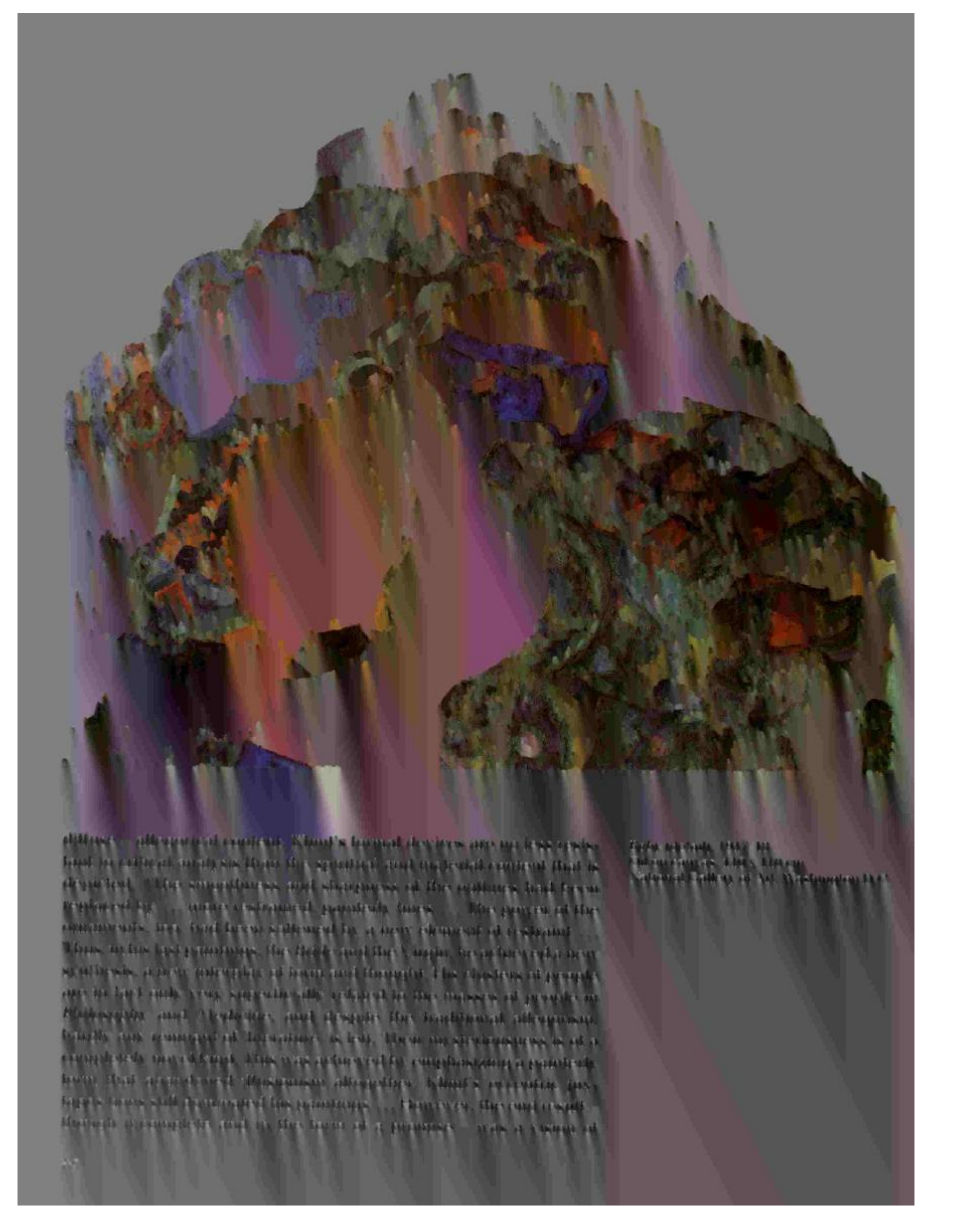
The lack of realism in these paintings [illegible] highly individualistic details is a result of their stylization, form and [illegible] rather



[illegible] Standing
[illegible]

[illegible]
Oil on canvas [illegible]

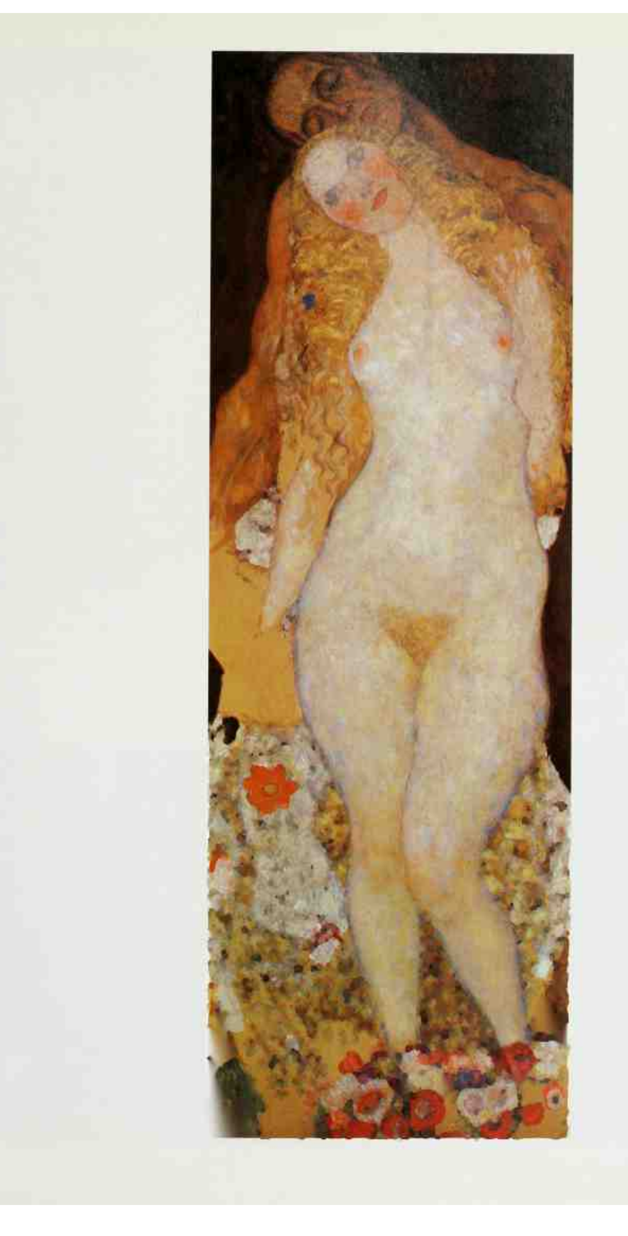

















Chronology

1862 Klimt is born at Baumgarten, near Vienna, on 14th July. He is the second of seven children. His father, Ernst Klimt (1834–1892), is an engraver and comes from Bohemia. His mother, Anna Klimt (née Finster, 1836–1915), [illegible] brothers and sisters, Klara (1860–1937), Ernst (1864–1892), Hermine (1865–1938), Georg (1867–1931), Anna (1869–1874) and Johanna (1873–1950).

1876 Joins the School of Applied Art of the Royal and Imperial Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, Vienna, where he is taught painting by Prof. Julius Victor Berger.

1877 Starts working together with his brother Ernst and their fellow student Franz Matsch. Takes part in [illegible] work for the Museum of Art History in Vienna as well as the artwork of the [illegible] for the Imperial silver wedding.

1883 Finishes his training at the School of Applied Art in Vienna. Forms 'Künstler-Compagnie' (Artists' Company) and opens studio [illegible] together with his brother Ernst and Franz Matsch.

1885–86 The three artists take on decoration jobs for the [illegible] publication of [illegible].

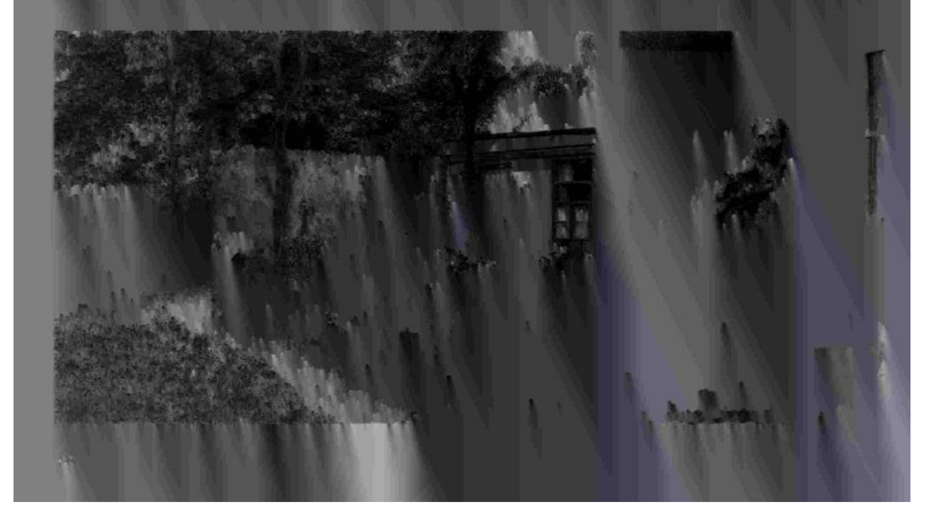
1886 Klimt and his Artists' Company start decoration work on the staircases of the Burgtheater.

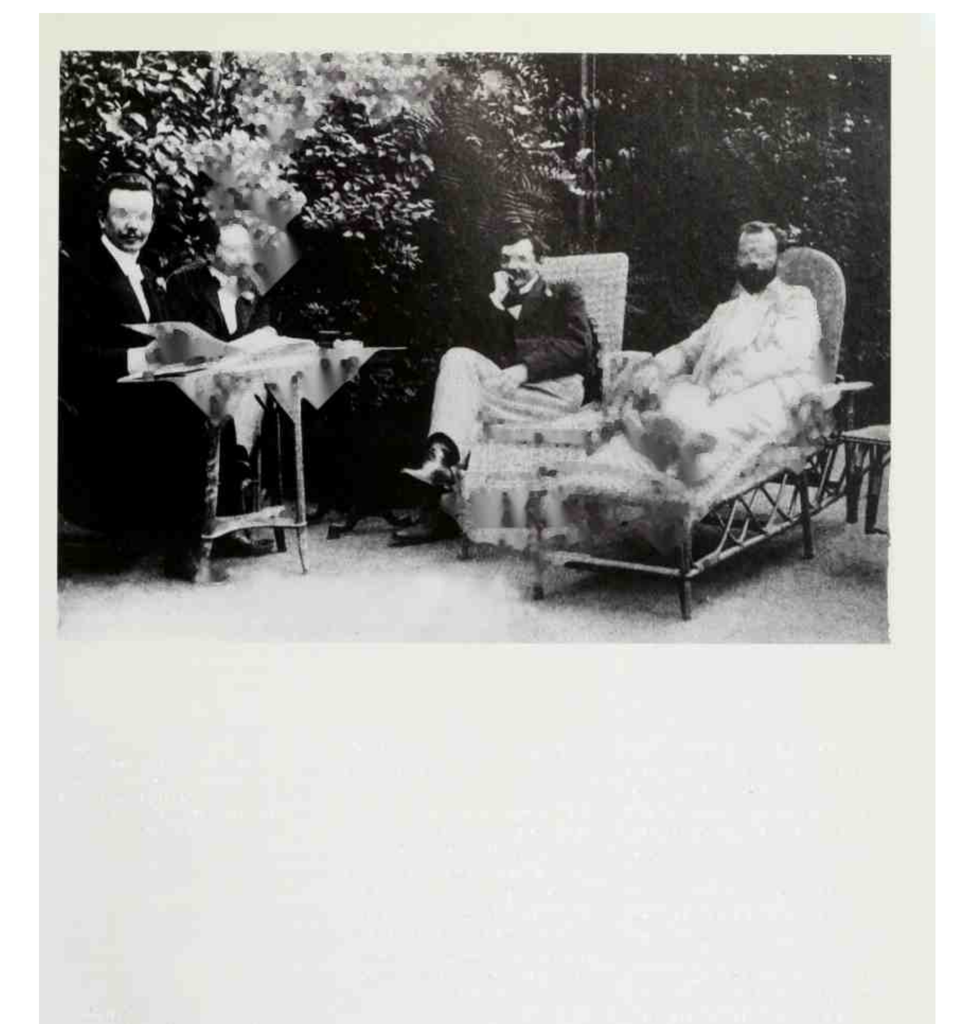
1887 Klimt is commissioned by Vienna's city council to paint an interior view of the old Burgtheater.

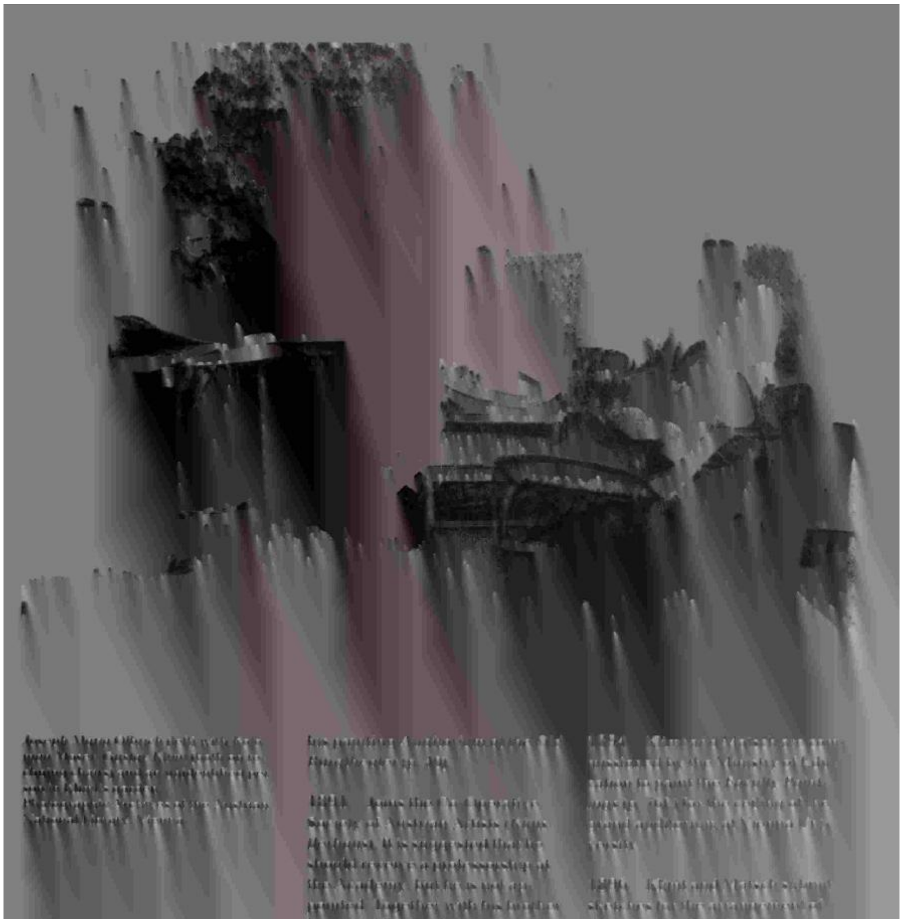
1888 Completion of the Burg theatre paintings. Klimt is awarded the Golden Cross of Merit.

1888–89 Travels to Trieste, Venice and Munich.

1890 Starts working on the decorations (spandrels and intercolumniations) of the staircase in the Museum of Art History in Vienna. He is the first person to receive the newly created Imperial Award for







Joseph Maria Olbrich's [illegible] Klimt [illegible] [illegible] in Klimt's garden.
Photograph: Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, Vienna.

Figure [illegible]
Klimt in the garden of his studio [illegible], Vienna.

Figure [illegible]
Klimt [illegible] in front of his studio.
Photograph: Courtesy of the Austrian National Library, Vienna.

his paintings [illegible] Burgtheater p. [illegible]

1891 Joins the [illegible] Society of Austrian Artists (Künstlerhaus). It is suggested that he should receive a professorship at the Academy, but he is not appointed. Together with his brother Ernst and Franz Matsch, he receives the highest possible recognition for his decorations of the Museum of Art History.

1892 His brother Ernst and his father both die.

1893 Travels to Hungary, where he is commissioned [illegible] to paint the theatre in [illegible].

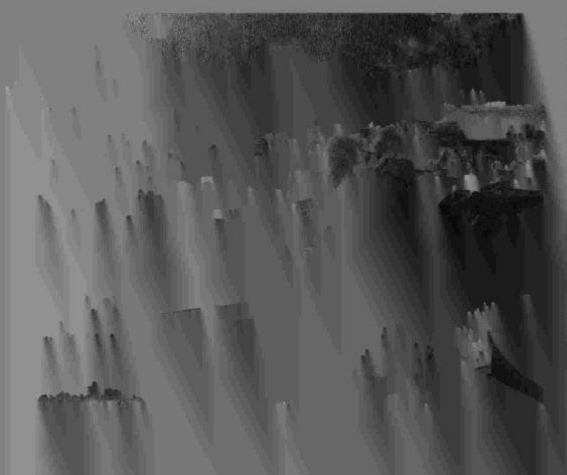
1894 [illegible] commissioned by the Ministry of Education to paint the Faculty Paintings, and also the ceiling of the great auditorium of Vienna University.

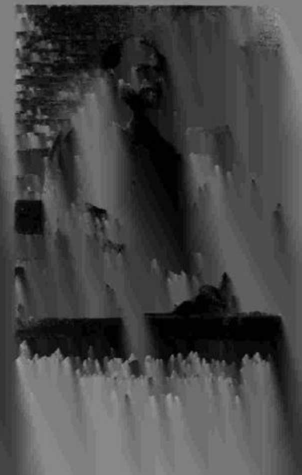
1896 Klimt and Matsch submit sketches for the arrangement of the Faculty Paintings.

1897 Klimt leaves the Cooperative Society of Austrian Artists. The Vienna Secession is founded by Joseph Maria Olbrich, Josef Hoffmann, and Klimt, who becomes its first president. He paints his first landscapes and works on the Faculty Paintings. (Illustrations pp. [illegible] and [illegible].)









1898 First Secession exhibition. Inauguration of the Secession journal *Ver Sacrum*. After lengthy arguments, Klimt is eventually commissioned to paint the *Faculty Paintings*. The Secession Building, designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich, is opened. Klimt is accepted as a member of the International Society of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers, London, and as an associate member of the Munich Secession.

1899 Concludes his supraporte paintings *Schubert at the Piano* and *Music* for the music room of Dumba Palace.

1900 [illegible] exhibits his unfinished *Philosophy* at the Secession Building, arousing widespread protest. Receives a Gold Medal for this painting at the Paris World Exhibition. Becomes a member of the Berlin Secession.

1901 Klimt's painting *Medicine* meets with a vehement reaction from the press and members of the public. The Bavarian State Collection of Paintings acquires *Music I*.

[illegible] Spends the summers at Lake Attersee.

1902 Beethoven Exhibition of the Secession, with Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze*, conceived as a monumental work of art. A number of drawings are bought by the Albertina Graphics Collection, Vienna.

1903 Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser found the Viennese Workshops, which Klimt thereafter supports considerably. Collective Secession exhibition with 80 works by Klimt. Travels to Ravenna and Florence. Continues to work on his *Faculty Paintings*, making radical changes.

1904 Klimt is asked to produce drafts for the *Stoclet Frieze* [illegible], a commission from the Stoclet Palace in Brussels. Takes part in exhibitions in Dresden and Munich.

1905 Rescinds the contract for the *Faculty Paintings* and buys back the drafts. Klimt Group leaves the Secession. Travels to Berlin, where he shows 15 paintings at an exhibition of the German Artists' Union, and receives the Villa Romana Award.

1906 Foundation of the Austrian Artists' Union, of which Klimt becomes president in 1912. Travels to Brussels for the first time (Stoclet Palace), then to London and Florence. He is made an honorary member of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, Munich.

1907 Completes his *Faculty Paintings* and exhibits them in Vienna and Berlin. [illegible] publishes erotic drawings by Klimt.

1908 Kunstschau in Vienna, an exhibition which encompasses all areas of art, including 16 paintings by Klimt. *The Kiss* [illegible] is bought by the Austrian State Gallery. Klimt is given the Gold Medal

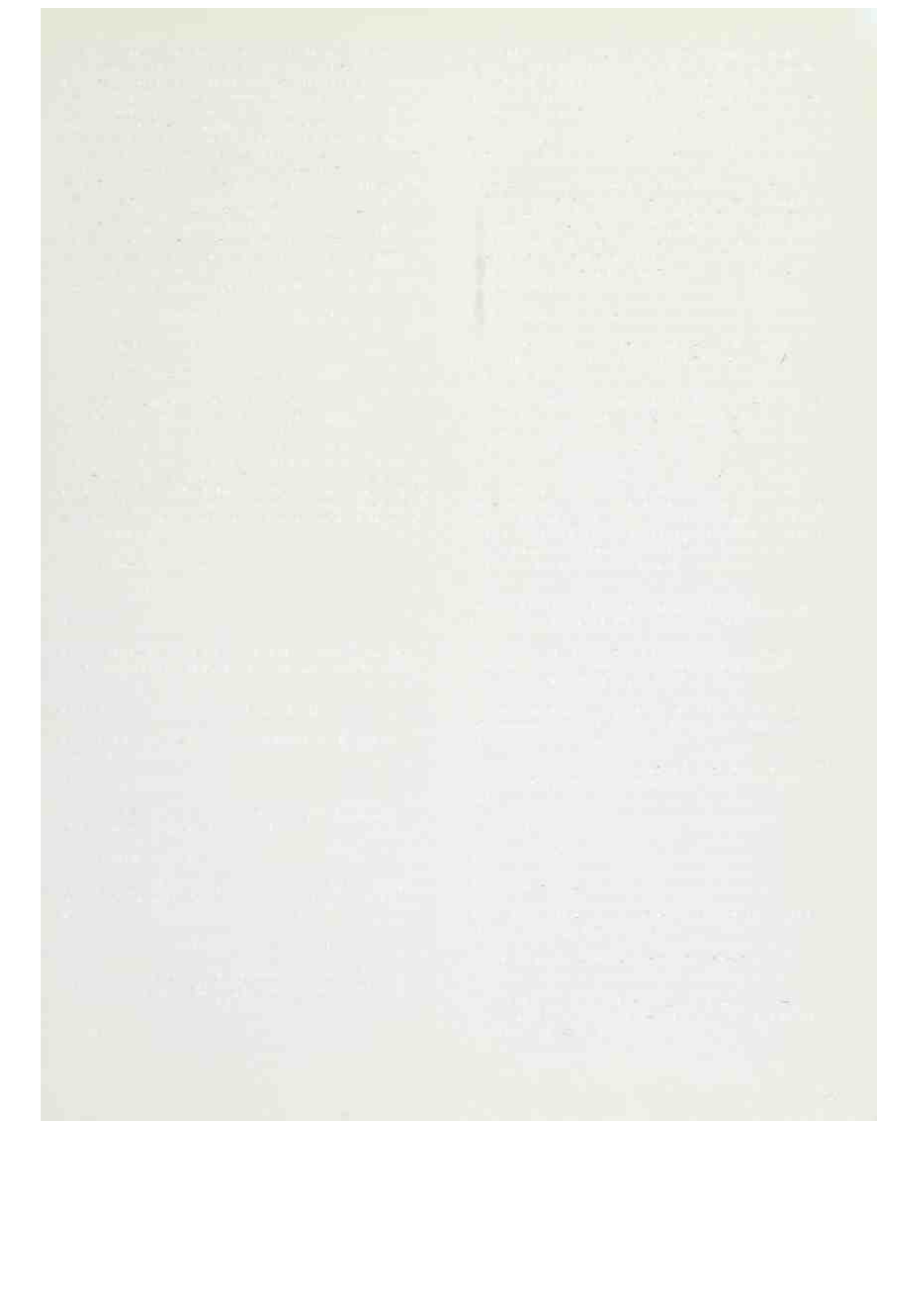


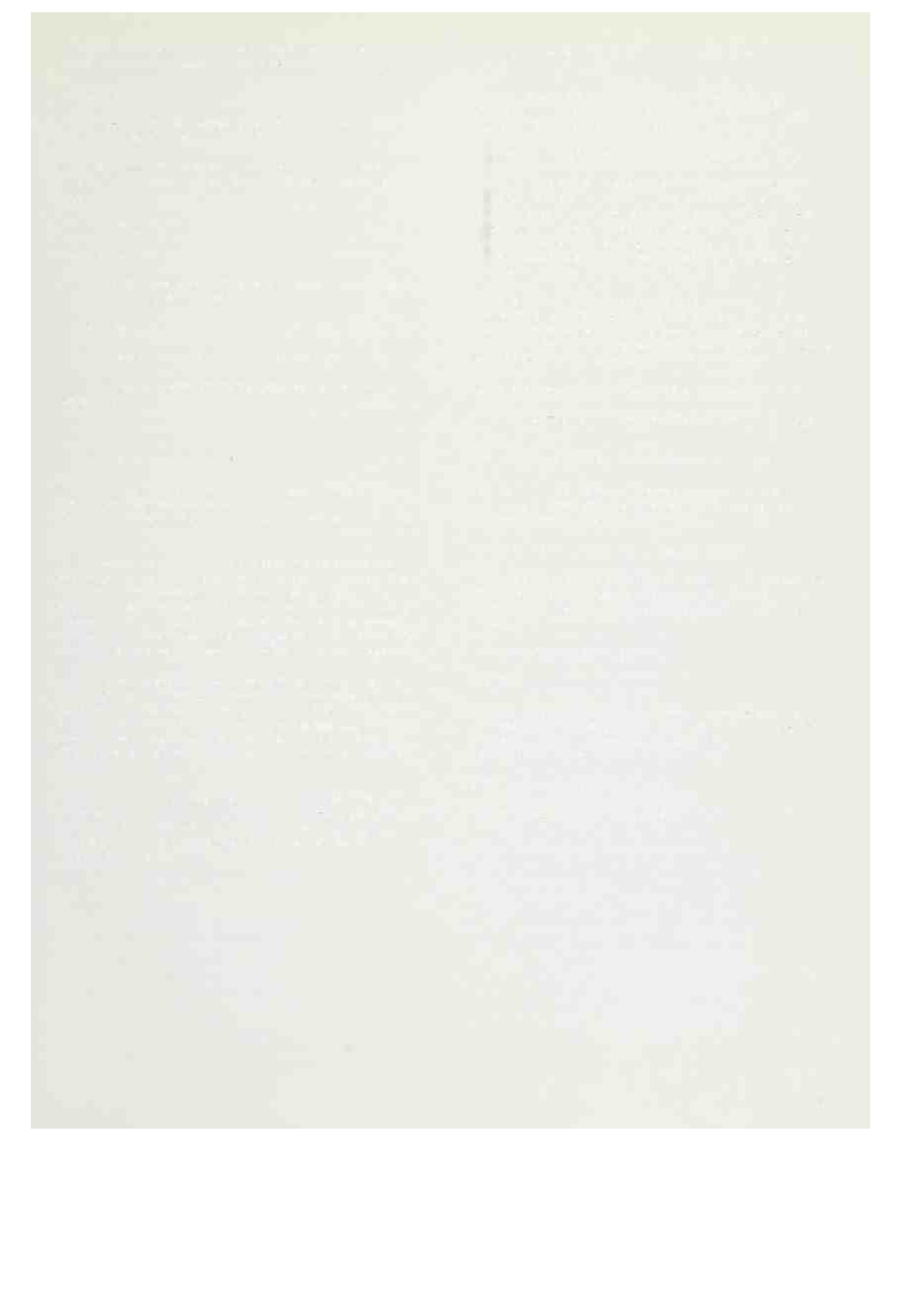






Notes





Bibliography

The publisher would like to express his gratitude to all museums, galleries, collectors, archives and photographers for their help in providing photographic material. Whenever possible, we have quoted the location and owner of each work, together with its title. We would also like to thank the following persons and institutions: Galerie Welz, Salzburg (pp. 16, 17, 18, 47, 52, 58, 76, 83, 85, 87, 89, 90, 94, 121, 143, 174, 175, 186, 187, 204, 209, 221, 224); Artothek, Planegg (pp. 2, 13, 34, 48, 55, 108, 109, 113, 114, 117, 122, 137, 141, 142, 176, 181, 184, 185, 200, 205, 215, 218, 229); Foto Fürböck, Graz/Austria (p. 197); Photobusiness Meyer, Leopoldsdorf/Vienna (pp. 28–31); the photographers Hans Wiesenhofer, Vienna (pp. 22–27, 96–99) and Hans Riha, Vienna (pp. 106–7) and Ernst und Sohn, Publishers, Berlin (p. 154).



